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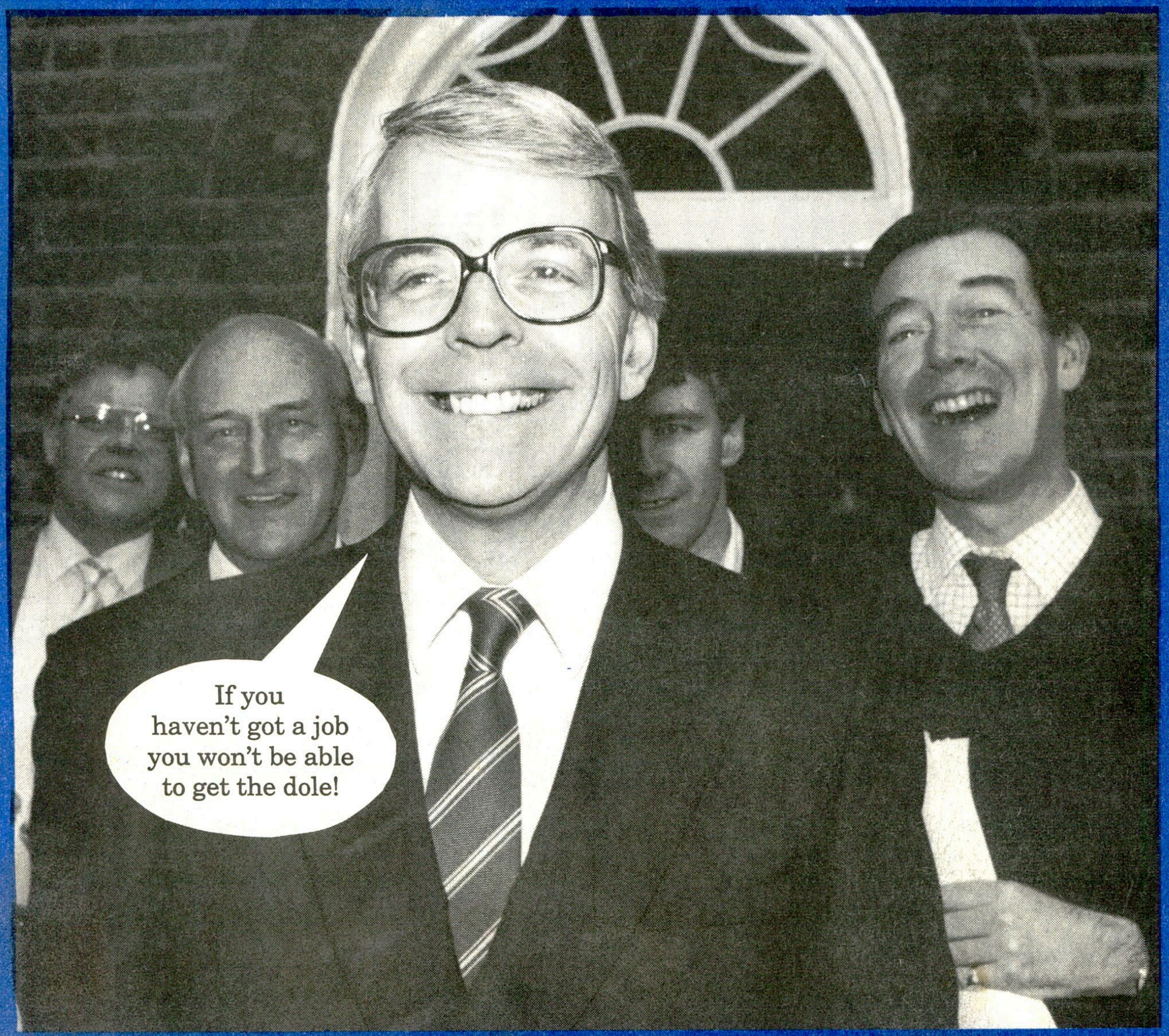

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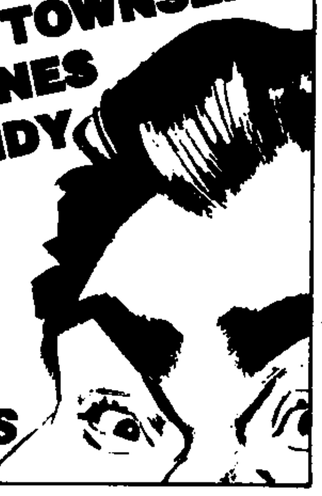

Another Annus Horribilis?

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What kind of a year do you think the Queen, Squidgy and the rest of the royals are going to have? Send us your cartoon interpretations, predictions and prescriptions for the royals in 1993.

Winning entries will be published in Living Marxism and The New Statesman magazine, and exhibited in Birmingham, London and on a national tour. The overall winner will be given a commission by The New Statesman and a major national newspaper.

Entrants should submit a slide or photocopy with dimensions of their cartoon (non-returnable), a stamped addressed envelope and their full name, address and telephone number to the Angle, The Arcadian, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4ST. Telephone 021 622 7187.Closing date for entries is March 5th 1993. Finalists will be invited to exhibit their work at the Angle Gallery from April 17th 1993

Work on show at the exhibition can be offered for sale.
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ASTYPALEA Spectacular white hill-top town in an azure setting. Totally undiscovered.
LEROS Lovely rolling green hills. Unspoilt. Quiet coves and beaches. An island to explore.
NISSYROS Flowers. Amazing lush vegetation surrounds a still smouldering volcano.
SPETSES Pine clad secluded bays, varied watersports, azure seas, lively nightlife.
TILOS Remote, tranquil, serene beauty.
SKIATHOS Cosmopolitan. Beautiful beaches, fun. Watersports galore. Fantastic nightlife.
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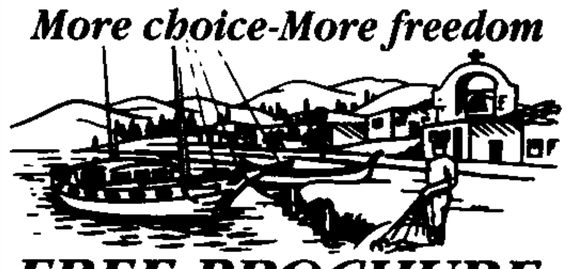

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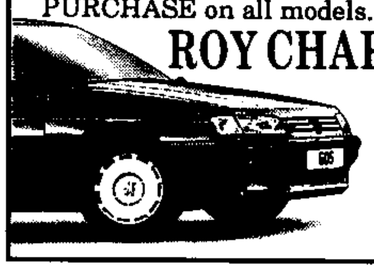

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IT WAS only too typical of the gutter press that my retirement from the Chairmanship of British Gnomeways should have been the subject of malicious smear and innuendo.

I had always made my intention to retire at the age of 58½ perfectly clear and last week's announcement had nothing whatever to do with the fact that a group of British Gnomeways employees had been recently arrested at Gatwick while tampering with the fuselage of various jets belonging to a rival fleet — Condom Airways.

From the beginning, I have made it plain that I knew nothing whatever about this so-called "Operation Matey".

Mr Emanuel Strobes who takes over as my successor from today was likewise totally and utterly unaware of anything whatever. In the absence on holiday of Mr Eugene Sue, Messrs Biddle & Partners are standing by should anything at all be stated to the contrary.

E. Strobes,
pp. Lord Gnome,
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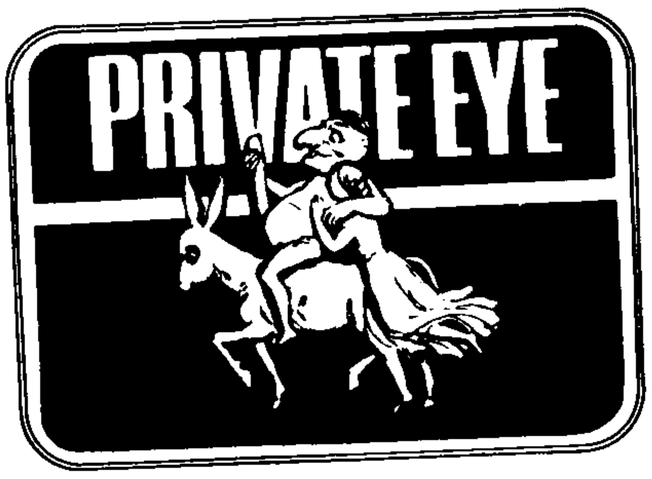


COLOUR SECTION

WAFIC SAID, the publicity shy Saudi Arabian millionaire and friend of Mark and Lady Thatcher, appears to have run into trouble in the United States following the collapse of two banks in which he played a significant role.

In August 1990 the National Bank of Washington, in which Mr Said held a 27 per cent shareholding, collapsed amid recriminations and management acrimony. Now a federal grand jury in Houston, Texas, is examining the collapse of another bank in which Mr Said played a key role: First City Bancorporation of Texas. According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the combined losses on the two bank failures may exceed $2 billion.

While the authorities make themselves busy picking up the pieces from the fallen Texas bank, investigators are busy looking at the involvement of a number of Middle Eastern players and wondering why a regional bank in Texas lent money to businesses linked to Mr Said in Washington and for property deals in Spain. Mr Said's Sifcorp affiliate helped recapitalise First City Bank in 1988 and as part of the transaction bought shares in a private placement.

Having helped bail the bank out, Mr Said two years later introduced it to a $120 million loan that ultimately snowballed the bank into collapse. The problem loan was to neighbours of Mr Said, the Coca family of Spain, and when its existence was explained to the outside world shares in First City fell from $34 to $18 within days. The loan eventually went into default. Daniel Fisher of the *Houston Post* described the deal as the "first in a major series of losses" that eventually led to the bank's demise last October.

The bank was managed by Robert Abboud, a close associate of Mr Said at Sifcorp, and a friend of the Iraqis. Telexes in the hands of the House banking committee in Washington reveal that in 1988 Mr Abboud was in discussions with the Iraqis and the Atlanta branch of Banca Nazionale del Lavoro about providing Iraq with an "industrial development fund". One telex says that a team is being sent from Iraq as "a tribute to Abboud's contribution to Iraq." Fortunately for the American taxpayer the fund never went ahead owing to the scandal that erupted over BNL's unauthorised credits to Saddam Hussein.

Others associated with First City Bank and Robert Abboud include:

- **Sheikh Yamani**, the former Saudi oil minister who is said to have owned as much as 4 per cent of First City;
- **Suliman Olayan**, who has close ties to the Saudi royal family and who is a major shareholder in Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette (DLJ), the securities firm that managed the First City share offering in 1988. Mr Olayan is the man whom the *Sun* says was offered the British coal mines by Michael Heseltine. He also claims in an Arab magazine to be a founder shareholder of the *Independent* newspaper;
- **Rafik Hariri**, a billionaire Saudi construction magnate who had an 8.8 per cent stake in First City.

WOULD YOU buy a second-hand car from Lord King of Wartnaby? The question has not always been academic, as becomes clear when filling in the gap in the standard profiles of the great entrepreneur.

An abject failure at school in Surrey, King became a junior salesman at Combes in Guildford. The manager of one of the two Combes Garages was a senior Surrey freemason called Arthur Sykes. Sykes became manager for life after acquiring, through his strong freemason contacts, the coveted title of Ford main agent. Sykes acquired another Surrey firm, in Clandon, where he lived with his wife and five lovely daughters.

The oldest married an incompetent architect, John Poulson; and the second married John King. The Sykes sisters stayed close as their husbands shot up the ladder. Poulson, also a prominent freemason, became a freeman of Pontefract and head of one of the biggest architectural practices in the world. When Poulson's business started to falter, King did his best to rescue it. All to no avail. Poulson went bust after spending far too much on bribing politicians, council officials and anyone who could give him a contract. He went to prison and died this month.

A TERRIFIC panic is gripping senior ranks of the police about the impending report of Sir Patrick Sheehy.

It seems that Sir Patrick has been impressed by the arguments of many junior police officers that there are far too many senior ranks who are paid too much. Something like hysteria has been set off by the rumour that Sir Patrick might abolish the ranks of inspector and chief inspector, leaving a clear run from sergeant to superintendent.

This hysteria has nothing to do with the sudden rush of promotion of chief inspectors in the West Midlands.

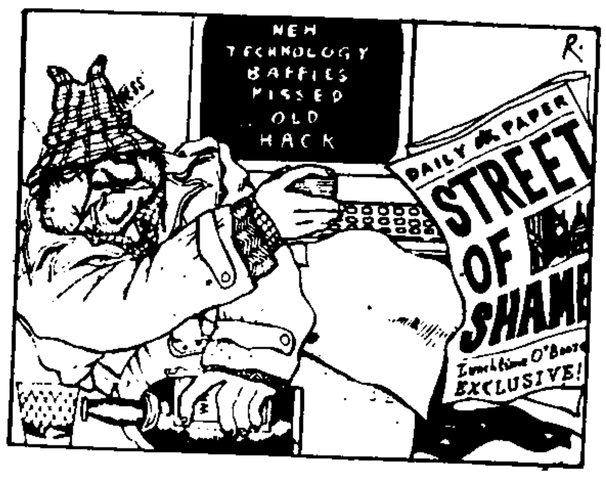
WHEN the Commons social services select committee restarts hearings into the Maxwell pensions scandal, its deliberations may be restricted by the serious fraud office (SFO) pending prosecutions of the Maxwell brothers and their aides.

Both the SFO and the select committee are keen to ensure that those nearly responsible for letting Robert Maxwell off the hook are never brought to book. Incredibly, neither the SFO nor the committee seems remotely interested in investigating the individuals who sat on the board of Mirror Group Newspapers without noticing £100 million going out of the company and £700 million from the pension fund.

There are no plans, for instance, for the committee to interview Sir Robert Clarke, former chief executive of Hill Samuel Merchant Bank, a business associate of Maxwell since 1968 and now chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers; nor Charlie Wilson, managing director; nor Roger Eastoe, deputy managing director.

All three hope that Frank Field, the lugubrious and slightly dense committee chairman, will not call them to the televised hearing. Any public humiliation, they feel, might damage the *Mirror* which, as Mr Field (Labour MP for Birkenhead) knows full well supports (so far, anyway) his party.

"... and the cigars are from the lads in Dirty Tricks!"



WHILE most of the fourth estate has written off John Major as a dithering dimwit, it is pleasing to report that at least one newspaper is treating the prime minister with the reverence due to him.

To illustrate Auberon Waugh's Way of the World column in the *Daily Telegrah* the Saturday before last, the cartoonist Willie Rushton had drawn a fetching picture of Major standing on a soap-box with his trousers around his ankles. This was too much for the poor old boxwallahs at the *Telegraph*, who claimed that it was libellous to portray the prime ministerial underpants. Besides, added deputy editor Trevor Grove, even if it wasn't libellous it was disrespectful and the *Daily Telegraph* should not mock the PM, who had "suffered enough".

By this stage Rushton could not be found to draw a new cartoon. So, ever resourceful, Grove simply chopped the existing one off at the waist with a pair of scissors.

LORD HOLLICK demanded apologies from the *Sunday Times* and the *Independent on Sunday* after they announced on 31 January that he was aiming to take control of Mirror Group Newspapers. A Hollick spokesman, quoted in the *Guardian*, said the story was "pure invention".

Yet it was the Labour peer's own publicist, Maurice Barnfather, of Barnfather Associates, who passed the inaccurate news to the two papers.

At the MGN board meeting last week, Lord Hollick and MGN's chairman, Sir Robert Clark, discussed the evidence of a mole in the boardroom. Barnfather was disowned.

The *Sunday Times* recanted: "Lord Hollick has asked us to point out that, contrary to our report last week, he is not seeking to take over MGN. We reported that a statement was made by Lord Hollick's spokesman. This statement should not have been attributed to the spokesman or Lord Hollick. We apologise."

It appears to be harder to convince the *Independent on Sunday* that it was wrong and that Barnfather is not Hollick's man. Despite pressure from the Labour peer, it has failed to provide a public apology.

Sales of the *Daily Mirror* in January 1993 fell 7 per cent against the same month last year.

ALEXANDER CHANCELLOR, who now edits the Talk of the Town section of Tina Brown's excitingly dull *New Yorker* magazine, has been ruminating — expertly, as it turns out — on the subject of plagiarism.

Time columnist Michael Kramer was caught repeating a phrase coined by former US solicitor general and Harvard Law School professor, Charles Fried. Kramer's excuse was that Fried's "felicitous phrase" had stuck in his mind, and Chancellor explained that "it is another example of a perplexing recurrent phenomenon in which one person's words get unconsciously lodged in another person's brain, only to be spewed out later in an almost identical form."

Chancellor should know. Back in 1986, his first despatch as Washington correspondent of the *Indescribablyboring* was a virtually verbatim reprint of a story he had read a few weeks earlier in the *New York Times*, about a man who lived in secret treehouses in Central Park.

Chancellor used the same quotes as the *New York Times* piece and even repeated the pay-off line about America being a land of opportunity — the only difference being the insertion of some up-market adjectives. This was a world away from the "involuntary" plagiarism that he writes about in the *New Yorker*; and Chancellor was no doubt wise not to have allowed the memory of this shabby incident to stick in his mind.

***OBSERVER* hack Peter Hillmore flew back early from the Short-Timman chess match in Spain two weeks ago, claiming there was no need to stay for the final day's play.**

The real reason for his early departure, however, was that he was booked to fly to Brazil for a freebie holiday the next day. Donald "Pixie" Trelford, who is something of a chess fanatic, was having none of this. Hillmore was ordered to turn around and head back to Spain immediately and was therefore tragically unable to join fellow hacks on the Brazil trip.

RACING hack Brough Scott's brown-nosing of his boss, Sheikh Mohammed, is no surprise to readers of the *Racing Post* (prop: S. Mohammed; ed. director: B. Scott). But he is now trotting out his views beyond the Maktoum stable, too.

In the *Post* early in January he puffed his master's involvement in Naad Al Sheba, a flashy new racecourse in Dubai, and put a fresh PR gloss on the "Maktoums to pull out" saga, last year's big racing story here in Britain.

Later in the month he was hyping again — this time in the *Sunday Times*. Describing a publicity stunt inspired by the sheikh — a horses v. camels race across the desert — he dipped his nib in treacle.

"Known to us only as the largest owner in horse racing history," Scott drooled, "this was no grey-suited figure in the Royal Box. He was on a magnificent big Arab... With his black beard and dark glasses flashing beneath the white wrap-around Arab headress, this was a figure like Saladin."

Why the *Sunset Times* should encourage such hero worship is a mystery — unless of course editor Andrew Neill is looking for a new kind of mount to take dancing at Tramp.

STUART KUTTNER, managing editor of the *News of the Screws*, is annoying staff by querying small amounts of expenses while paying inflated fees to his chums — such as Nick "Ohio" Davies and John Rogers of the Fleet Street News Agency.

It was Rogers who helped divert monies to Yorkshire Ripper's wife Sonia Sutcliffe in defiance of Rupert Murdoch's instructions as part of a plot with *Screws*' ex-editor Barry Askew. If police go ahead with a prosecution of Sonia Sutcliffe for perjury, *Screws* hacks are relishing the prospect of Kuttner being called as a witness since he will have to explain his unwillingness to speak up when he watched Sutcliffe lie on oath, thus leading to her infamous £600,000 award against the *Eye*.

It is also well known at Wapping that when the *Screws* decided to resist Sonia Sutcliffe's libel claim against the paper and both legal manager Tom Crone and deputy editor Paul Connew declared themselves in favour of going to trial, only one executive urged the paper to settle out of court: Stuart Kuttner.

AS THE bloodletting at the *Mirror* continues, supervised by David "Rommel" Montgomery, the bankers who installed him may be asking themselves quite what he is up to.

"Rommel" gives the impression that the purpose of the recent sackings is to save money, and thus protect the company from toppling into the financial abyss. In practice, however, he is achieving precisely the opposite.

Take the case of Bill Thornton, the veteran sports reporter at the *Mirror*'s Manchester office. As we reported in the last *Eye*, he was abruptly fired last month. Thornton was on a salary of £35,000 a year, and did not have a company car. He has now been replaced by former *Daily Star* hack Dave Armitage, who has successfully demanded a salary of £39,000 a year, plus car. So the *Mirror* has made a net loss on the sacking — especially as it also had to give Thornton a pay-off of £35,000.

Take, too, the case of David Leigh, one of the *Mirror* "casuals" axed by Montgomery at the end of last year. He has now been given a staff reporter's job at the paper on a far higher salary than he ever earned as a casual. (Far higher, indeed, than the salaries of many existing *Mirror* staff — a source of some resentment in the office.) The logic of all this may be apparent to "Rommel", but everyone else is mystified.

To add to the financial confusion, few bills are being paid. Deputy managing editor Colin Harrow is said to have a four-foot pile of unpaid invoices on his desk — which he cannot pass on to the cashiers for the simple reason that most of the cashiers have been sacked. Some freelances are now owed thousands of pounds in fees and expenses. "Rommel" may imagine that this is a smart money-saving wheeze, but given the *Mirror*'s precarious financial state it is risky: if an irate creditor were to obtain a county court judgment against the *Mirror*, the company could find itself being wound up.

MEANWHILE, the Montgomery regime is busy dreaming up ever more fiendish methods of firing people.

One new technique, tried out last week on *Mirror* hacks Frank Gilbride and Kevin O'Lone, is to ask the unwitting victims to go to the 9th floor. As they get into the lift, the doomed hacks suddenly find themselves joined by Amanda "killer bimbo" Platell, the new group managing editor, who smiles knowingly at them. Emerging from the lift on the 9th floor, they are greeted by Robert Gregory, the amusingly-titled director of human resources, who curtly informs them that they're sacked, presents them with a cheque and orders them out of the building.

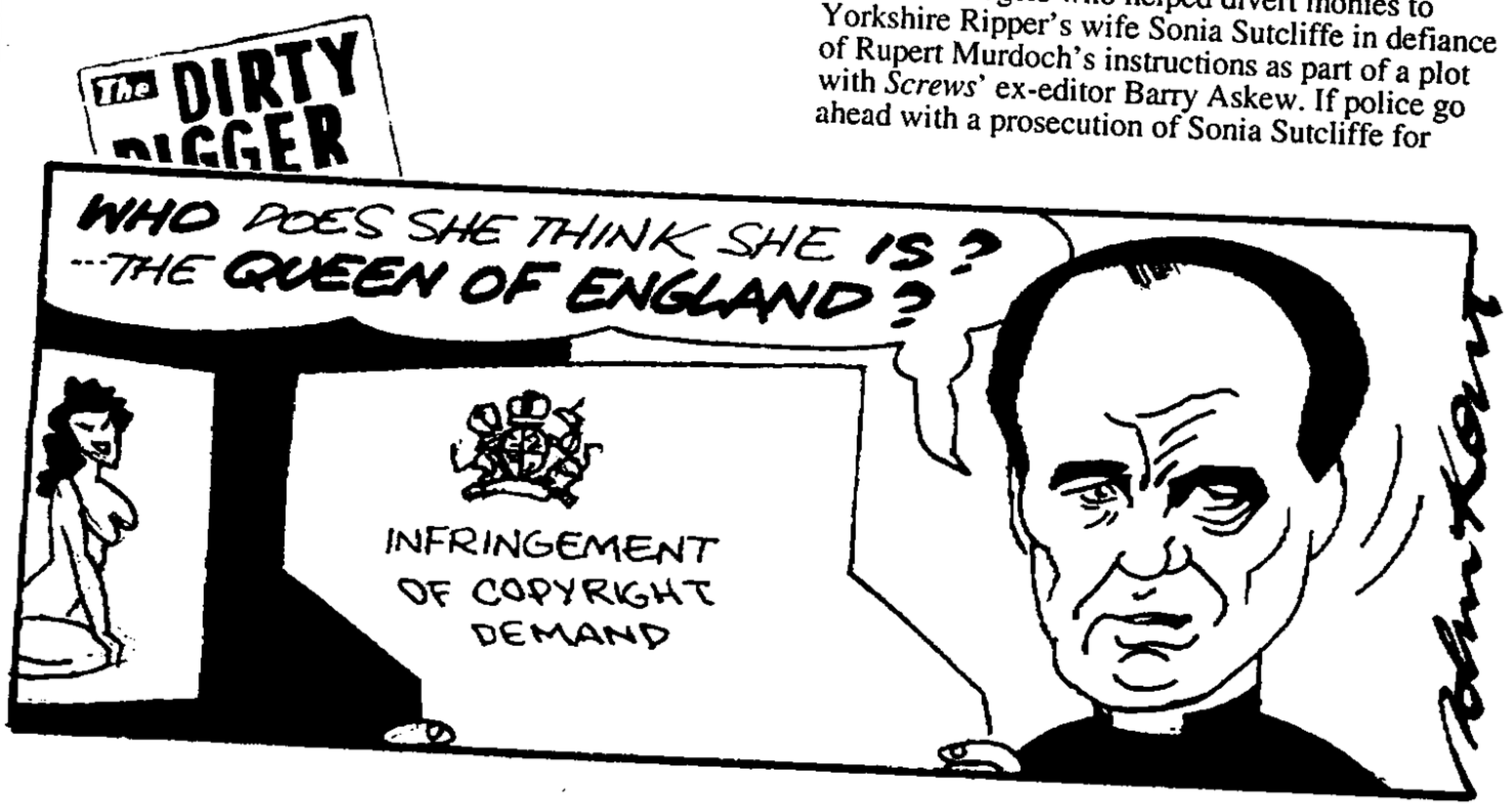
JUST FANCY THAT!!

The time has come to say thank you, Wade, and goodbye

Evening Standard 18.1.93 p.52

England need the power of Dooley

Evening Standard 18.1.93 p.53



IF LABOUR had any nous it could stop John "Brunel" MacGregor's railways (destruction) bill dead in its tracks.

It could be done without sounding at all left-wing or behaving in any other uncharacteristic way. All the party has to do is ensure that investors in the new franchises appreciate that an incoming Labour chancellor would not be bound to continue paying subsidies at the levels agreed by the present government.

After all, if BR's subsidies (for socially necessary rail services) are fixed on a year-to-year basis, why should private operators be given 15-year deals, with their impact on the national budget and the economy as a whole? The fact is, without long-term subsidy deals, private investors would not be seen for dust. As for "commercial" rail services not requiring subsidy, it looks as if, apart from Gatwick, there won't be any. Certainly not after the first chairman of Railtrack, Robert "Gillette" Horton, has had a go at fixing his tariffs. On past form, he knows how to charge for his services, and his presence as BR's deputy chairman has been enough to make Sir Robert Reid pipe down.

If the (destruction) bill survives the storm of popular outrage, it will be a triumph not for transport secretary MacGregor, who is seriously uninterested in railways and plans to be in the treasury by July, but for his very expensive privatisation adviser, Christopher Foster. Foster, a director of Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte (which has made more money than any other consultant as BR's ostensible friend), has emerged as the arch-destroyer of the national rail network. He has at last made up for the frustrating period he spent at the transport department in 1974-77 when, as economic adviser to Tony Crosland, Bill Rodgers, John Horam and other rail-hating "socialists", he laboured in vain to close down half the network and stop subsidising the London commuter lines.

Foster, too, was Labour then. Nowadays, Sir Christopher, as he likes to be known, has younger mentors. Step forward Michael Portillo and John Redwood. It is a tribute to their influence on the government that such a crazy measure as the railways (destruction) bill has made such headway. It was the much overrated Portillo who invented franchising when he was minister of public transport under Parkinson (who had no time for it), while the saturnine Redwood spent much of his period at the Downing Street policy unit conceiving an intense hatred of railways.

Their main aim, of course, is to save public money. As all the current indications are that the hugely bureaucratic new set-up will cost much more than the present one, the only way of eventually saving public money is by adopting the final (Foster) solution of 1977 (the same as the Serpell solution of 1983) — and shut down most of the network.

● *See also 'In the Back', p. 27.*

JUNIOR health minister Tim Yeo is no doubt pleased that the new rules on political advertising exclude political parties.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has decided to revise its code of practice to cover non-broadcast political advertisements — other than those from political parties. This seems rather pointless since the only reason the issue arose in the first place was because there were claims that inaccurate poster advertising had helped the Tories win the last election.

FACT: One of the advisers brought in by the ASA was Diane Yeo, Tim Yeo's wife, who is a charity commissioner. The chairman of the ASA, Sir Timothy Raison, is a former Tory minister.

WHILE Mr Justice Scott pursues his inquiry into the Matrix-Churchill scandal, senior ministers are energetically promoting their agreed alibi: "It wasn't our fault. Blame Alan Clark — he was the only one of us who was soft on Iraq".

This is the exact opposite of the truth. A new book on Iraqgate by *Observer* hack John Sweeney reveals that Clark visited Iraq just once during his time as a DTI minister, and found the country "creepy". Worse still, the food disagreed with him. "I had a terrible tummy-ache, the worst I'd ever had," Clark told Sweeney. "When I came back I said 'I'm not going back to that fucking place again'."

Faced with this refusal, the following year (1988) the government sent a different DTI minister, Tony Newton. His enthusiasm for Saddam Hussein was such that he promptly doubled Britain's trade credits to Baghdad. This largesse was arranged with the assistance of a then humble treasury minister — John Major.

DISGRACED former Tory MP and ex-Guards officer John Browne has been revisiting old haunts.

He has been showing up in Winchester most weekends and has even addressed a meeting at one of the Conservative clubs there. He has also addressed a meeting at the city's Guildhall in conjunction with a local ant-Maastricht group, claiming he has always been opposed to EC federalism.

Apparently he intends to offer himself as an independent anti-Maastricht Conservative in the forthcoming Euro-elections.

FOLLOWING our report in the last *Eye* about Jimmy "I.R." Wray's scam of selling two bronze figurines of medieval knights on horseback under false pretences to his turf-loving colleague Alan Meale, we can report that relations between the two MPs have soured further.

Meale's wife has told her husband that she wants him to get his £500 back and that under no circumstances will she have the figurines cluttering up her front room. Wray, however, is refusing to play ball, although he has indicated that he is prepared to repay a proportion of the sum.

The two bruisers, once inseparable, are now to be seen at opposite ends of the Commons tea room.

MEANWHILE it has emerged that Wray has benefited indirectly from the Thatcher government's right-to-buy legislation.

His London home is a former council flat in Hayles Buildings at the Elephant & Castle. The thousands on Southwark's housing waiting-list will no doubt be gratified to know that flats originally rented out to the poor and homeless have now been bought by Labour MPs as second homes.

In addition, Wray has an occasional tenant in Tommy Graham, the 20-stone, all drinking-and-smoking MP for Renfrew West and Inverclyde, who is often described as a by-election waiting to happen.

Graham is not frequent in his attendance at Westminster, but when he wishes to stay he pays Wray £15 per night in rent. Presumably he does not claim his full additional costs allowance of £10,900 for living in London.

***RAMBLING TODAY* reports another cock-up by the incompetent Major administration.**

As a result of a letter-writing campaign by ramblers, the prime minister gave a promise that woods and forests belonging to the Forestry Commission would not be privatised.

However, a further letter then had to be sent out by Major's office, revising his position and apologising that "the commitment given by the prime minister on this matter was drafted incorrectly during the frenzied activity of the general election campaign".

Eggs 89/437/EEC

Draft Egg Products Regulations.

Regulations are expected to be laid before Parliament by the end of the month.

Environmental Health News

Sir: What a huge sense of relief we can all feel now that Bill Clinton has been sworn in. For the first time in decades the motley interests of the United States have been embraced by one intelligent, able and hard-working person.

After months on the campaign trail, Clinton and Gore stood proud and assured on the podium — masters of their generation and heroes to most liberal thinkers the world over.

They offer my generation — two or three steps behind theirs — true hope for our future. Now e must wait until our fellow citizens "summon the change" and elect home-grown heroes to lead our country.

AMANDA KLEEMAN
Letter in Independent

To the most magnificent,
Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven,
Prime Minister of Great Britain 1979-1990,
from one of her many servants, who believes she could have been better served.

ALISTAIR McALPINE
Dedication to "The Servant"

Submitted by M.D. Coles, Christopher Murphy.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

THAT shortlived chairman of BP, Robert Horton, has disappointed his few followers by not being available for interview when his appointment as chairman of the new Railtrack authority was announced.

Railtrack is to be the centre piece of the government's hare-brained rail privatisation scheme. Not much of a consolation prize for Horton after being booted out of BP — but hacks were still slightly surprised he should choose this particular moment to be away in Mexico on holiday for three weeks.

IF MICHAEL HESELTINE, president of the board of trade, wonders why cuts in interest rates are not producing investment to boost the economy, he need look no further than the secret weapon used by shortsighted monetarists at the treasury: the discount rate.

It is not the interest rate but the *discount rate* that determines public spending, whether by government, local authority or quango, and its current level of 8 percent is now absurdly high.

The 8 percent rate is the annual level of return required from any investment of public money. And its effect is to make worthwhile projects which cost big sums at the outset appear hopelessly expensive, even if they will pay for themselves later on. The high rate thus discourages investment and suits the monetarists who have an allergy to any form of public spending and prefer hoarding.

The treasury decides at what level the discount rate is imposed, and in 1989 it persuaded its then chief secretary, John Major, to raise the rate from 5 percent to 8 percent. Despite the recession, it has stayed up there ever since.

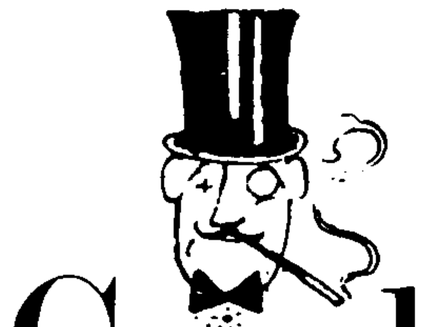
Major should be forgiven: he didn't know what he was doing, as Nigel Lawson, who was then chancellor, has said. But as long as it stays high, with nobody taking much notice of it, growth will stagnate, with or without Hezza at the board of trade.

'Backbiter'

Apology

IN *EYE* 811 we claimed in the course of our New Boy profile of Alan Milburn MP that his first wife, Ms Mo O'Toole, had undergone sterilisation because the couple decided they did not want to have children.

We have been assured by Ms O'Toole that this was not the case and we offer our sincere apologies for causing her distress.



Grovel

THE QUEEN telephones me to say that she is very worried by the fresh crop of royal books currently in production. I don't blame her.

The royal family has little to fear from Jonathan Dimbleby, who is beavering away on his "nice" official biography of the Heir of Sorrows. But what about the once royal-approved Anthony Holden, whose revised, scolding biography of Prince Charles was published in 1988?

He is now at work on what will no doubt be a waspish account of the House of Windsor and, by all accounts, feels rather let down by his prince. In *The Tarnished Crown* he promises — yawn, yawn — revelations on the disintegration of *four* royal marriages. Whose is the fourth?

Meanwhile, nice Lady Longford has had to call back from the press her book on the state of the Windsors to make some judicious amendments. Certainly she can be relied upon to be sympathetic — up to a Catholic point.

The most worrying book for Brenda is clearly Kitty Kelley's, ostensibly about her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, but in fact about all the Windsors. Why is Kitty Kelley, most publicity-conscious of authors, not mentioned these days in the American tabloids and magazines? Because surreptitiously she has settled down to married life in London where, unbeknown to most, she is interviewing the royal butcher, baker, candlestick maker, milkman et al.

Kelly may have noted that fellow US dial-a-biographer Donald Spoto is working on Marilyn Monroe for HarperCollins in the States and Chatto & Windus here. What she does not know is that Spoto is also under contract to Simon & Schuster to provide a muck raising book on the brown Windsor soup. He's been paid a pretty penny on the understanding that his version of Windsorgate is in the shops before Kelley's. The Queen is not amused.

I HEAR THAT the late Bubbles Rothermere's former "walker", Duncan Roy, is threatening to sue the Groucho Club and a member of its staff for assault. But lest anyone be fooled into believing his outrageous claims, I wish to state certain facts for the record.

A couple of months back Roy, who is not a member of the Groucho, was attempting to gain access to the club for a drink when he became involved in an altercation with the duty receptionist, evening, Jennifer Cairney. Roy decided he didn't like her tone when she told him that she had to answer the phone, so he grabbed the receiver from her and coshed her over the head with it. She reported the assault to the police who later charged him. His friend, who had witnessed his violent behaviour, came round the next day to apologise for Roy's antics.

Unfortunately Jennifer Cairney was on holiday in New Zealand when the court gave her five days' notice of a hearing (she had been told that the case would not be until February). In the absence of any evidence being offered by the police, Roy was acquitted and immediately rang up Londoner's Diary on the *Evening Standard* to say that he would be gunning for Cairney through the courts. For her part, Cairney is most peeved at having missed her opportunity to see Roy convicted of assault.

"He's a bit gung-homosexual"

I AM CONTACTED by erstwhile comrades of Dennis Nilsen, the mass murderer turned TV star, who recall an unfortunate incident involving the former trade union activist (he was also an ex-army cook and copper) and one of his very large saucepans.

Nilsen worked for more than a decade at job centres in north London, and was an active member of the CPSA, the civil servants' union. In between finding permanent accommodation for homeless males beneath the floorboards of his home, he also supported numerous demos in the 1970s, such as the picket of the Garners Steak House.

Former activists remind me of the contribution Nilsen made to a fundraising event, when organisers of the "social" were worried that their cooking equipment wouldn't be big enough to provide chilli con carne for all the expected numbers. "Don't worry, comrades," Nilsen volunteered, "I've got a large double-handled cooking pot at home you can borrow."

The comrades, who learnt some years later that the same pot had been used to boil a human head or two, have not touched Mexican food since.

MY CHEEKY chum Kelvin Mackenzie, editor of the *Sun*, loves a good giggle, and to this end has splashed out £600 of his own lolly on a specially sculptured brown nose.

The hooter, Kelvin announced at the annual meeting of Murdoch editors in Aspen, Colorado, was to be awarded to the editor who had been the most sycophantic towards Rupert Murdoch in 1992. There was only one judge — Kelvin Mackenzie — which meant that despite his own considerable brown-nosing he was not eligible for the prize.

Speaking to the assembled arselickers, Mackenzie turned first to Andrew Knight, the News International chief executive. "I'm afraid, Andrew, you are not eligible either," he said sadly. "This is an award for amateurs and you are a professional."

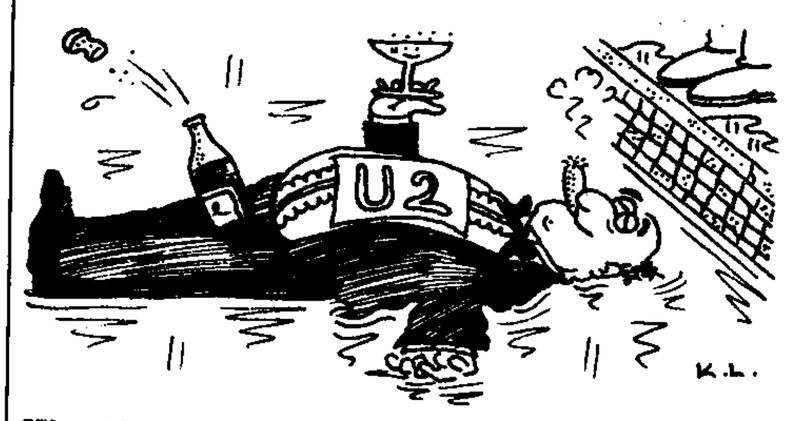
After running through the outstanding contributions of other editors (Andrew Neill won fulsome praise), Mackenzie then announced the winner: David Banks, then editor of Murdoch's paper in Melbourne.

Banks, the Grovelling Giant, had pipped his rivals at the post at the previous evening's monster booze-up. Deep in his cups, he interrupted a general session of praising Murdoch by suddenly bursting into tears. "You know," he told his colleagues weepily "I really think I love that man."

Mr Banks now "edits" the *Daily Mirror*, which is not owned by Mr Murdoch but is controlled entirely by his toadies.

Pip Pip!

Pseuds Corner



Watching Charles Delevingne's impersonation of a U-boat in full black tie in a swimming-pool in the Caribbean at 1 a.m. is one of those moments that make life worth living.

KATE REARDON
Tatler

Surely English poetry has few lines as wonderfully and weirdly attractive as

away flies
a carrot I
was about to eat

JOHN ASHBERY
P.N. Review

Lady Weinberg (aka Anouska Hempel) had brought along some of her current cruisewear and eveningwear collection, which was worn to great effect for *Tatler* by the female members of her party; Miss Sascha Hempel, Mrs Galen Weston, Miss Sarah Graham, Mrs Tommy Sopwith, Mrs Ayeshgl Nadir, Mrs David Metcalfe, Miss Joan Viskant, Lady Powell, Mrs Charles Delevingne and Princess Ira von Fürstenberg. They were escorted by Sir Mark Weinberg, Mr Ned Ryan, Mr Cesare Canavesio, Lord Ivor Mountbatten, Mr Mark Cecil, Mr Mark Lloyd, and the submersible Mr Charles Delevingne.

KATE REARDON
Tatler

I can't think of any world event I find worrying. I feel full of optimism and hope.

PIERS PAUL READ
Independent on Sunday

The inaugural party was held on the Saturday night, by which time a further 200 excited guests had arrived, including Johnny and Jan Gold, Bruce Oldfield, Amanda Donahoe, Veronica Webb, and Sue and Jeremy Beadle (a man much misunderstood, but one of the funniest ever).

KATE REARDON
Tatler

The most serious, authoritative, witty, diverse and stimulating cultural publication in all the five languages I speak.

MARIO VARGA LLOSA
Advert for Times Literary Supplement

At L'Arpège in Paris, chef Alain Passard cooks *poulet de Janzé* on a bed of hay in a Pyrex casserole, which is the inspiration behind this dish. If you can get clean, sweet hay from unsprayed meadow grasses, I urge you to try it.

FRANCES BISSELL
Country Living

CONTRIBUTORS: Jenny Boston, Anon, E. Strobes, Charles Newman.

£10 paid for entries

NOOKS and CORNERS

SOME readers may find my illustration offensive. I regret this, but it is *art*.

The photograph was taken by Lord Snowdon, commissioned by My Lord Palumbo, chairman of the Arts Council, and it depicts The Worshipful Sir Peter Boydell QC, chancellor of the dioceses of Truro, Oxford and Worcester, who is Palumbo's legal adviser and counsel.

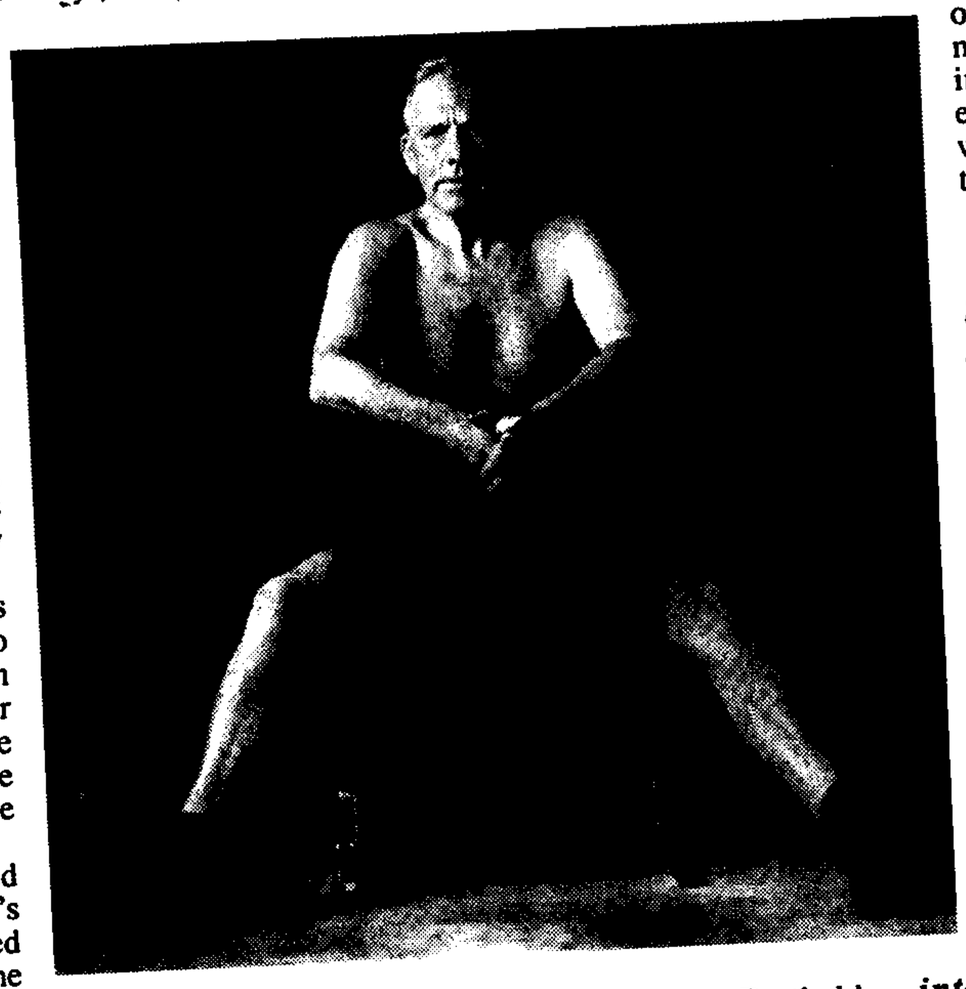
It is one of the photographs specially taken of those who supported him at the first Mansion House Square public inquiry in 1984, although most of those who enjoyed milord's *largesse* chose to be recorded for posterity wearing more than just a pair of boots.

A new stage has been reached in Palumbo's long, boring campaign to erect a monument to his family in the heart of the City of London in defiance of the City Corporation and our historic building and planning laws — and he thinks he may be in sight of his goal. So more pro-Palumbo puffs have been appearing in the press.

Before Christmas, the *Spectator* published a disgracefully partisan Diary by Palumbo's crony, Nigel Pratt-Dumpster, which argued that the City's continuing opposition to the development of the No 1 Poultry site is a scandal needing investigation, when what needs investigation is why the result of two properly conducted public inquiries into the gratuitous demolition of listed buildings in the way of Palumbo's ambitions should have been twisted by pliant secretaries of state for the environment. But Dumpster, of course, is one of those who believes that the possession of great inherited wealth grants not only respectability but also complete freedom of action plus transcendant aesthetic judgement.

More recently, the *Independent on Sunday* carried a long Palumbo puff by Stephen Fay, masquerading as an article about his architect, the late Sir James Stirling. Describing his conflict with the City, this contained the extraordinary assertion that, "unlike other developers, Palumbo never lobbied local politicians for support. He says that to do so is dishonourable..." How then, I wonder, would he describe the process of arranging for his company to give money to the Conservative party? And isn't it funny that Patrick Jenkin and Nicholas Ridley successively manipulated public inquiries to Palumbo's advantage, despite informed and convincing opposition?

But even some of Stirling's admirers consider that the proposed wireless set for No 1 Poultry is no great shakes. Indeed, the late, great Berthold Lubetkin dared to speak his mind and confess that he was very "disappointed" with the design. Outrageous disloyalty! After all, Palumbo had paid for the restoration of Lubetkin's famous Penguin Pool, so the old boy was punished by being cast into outer darkness — until he died, that is. Then up pops My Lord Palumbo on television to say what a genius he was. Such is patronage; such is discrimination. But I digress...



To build this posthumous Stirling "masterpiece", Bucklersbury, the ancient winding street across the site, must be closed and this was opposed by the City, together with valiant SAVE Britain's Heritage (who fought Palumbo to the Lords and were almost destroyed by massive legal costs). It was then found that, thanks to a special charter of James I, the corporation owned the soil beneath Bucklersbury. Palumbo claims this was sprung on him without warning, which suggests his legal advisers were not on the ball.

In the event, Palumbo proceeded in his customary manner: by making the City an offer it could not refuse for the necessary subsoil. But gloating is not yet called for; this does not affect the necessary road closure order which brave SAVE is opposing at a hearing later this year. So all is not lost, even though Palumbo's *apparatchiks* insist that the time and money Palumbo has expended entitles him to achieve what he wants. A curious notion, but typical of our times.

I MUST say I prefer a photograph of Sir Peter Boydell QC naked to one of Mr Jocelyn Stevens, CVO, the egregious chairman of poor English Heritage, clothed.

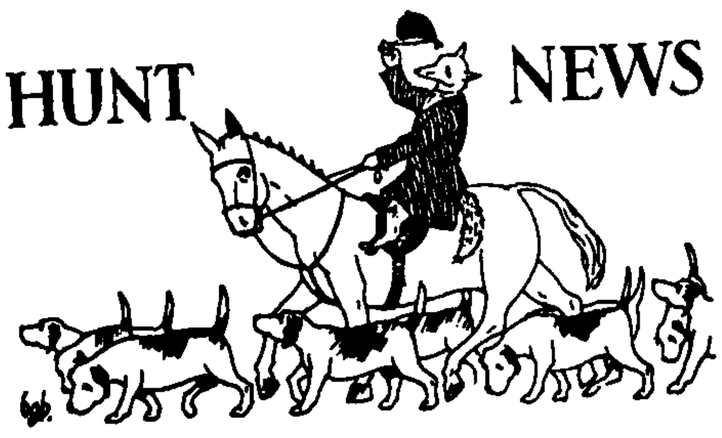
Piranha Teeth's plans for London (Eyes 806 and 807) so alarm a group of individuals who know rather more, and care rather more, than he about the capital's historic buildings, that they have established a "Committee for the Future of London's Architectural Heritage".

On 26 January, at his invitation, four of them met Stevens and his chief executive, Jennie Page. The meeting lasted for perhaps 10 minutes. Having rubbished the committee's credentials and actions, Stevens worked himself up into one of his celebrated typewriter-throwing rages, slammed his papers shut and shouted: "This meeting is at an end. Get out of my office!" To complete the effect, as they left he bawled down the corridor: "What do you mean by coming here with that little man?!" This was a subtle reference to John Anstey, the distinguished building surveyor and philanthropist, who was a victim of polio as a child.

It used to be said that a gentleman was one who was never unintentionally rude. But, of course, such histrionics merely serve to conceal the fact that Stevens knows little of the work of the quango he runs, had not properly briefed himself and therefore could not cope with the pertinent arguments raised by the visiting committee. How long can Peter Brooke, who is rumoured to be a gentleman, tolerate this boor disposing of the nation's "heritage"?

'Piloti'

HUNT NEWS



LAST year the *Eye* attacked the *Sunday Express* for libelling hunt saboteur Ann Llewellyn, whom it described as an "ALF activist" even though it was unable to produce any evidence that she had ever been associated with animal rights activities.

Llewellyn had also been accused of an assault during a meet of the Surrey Union Foxhunt in the autumn of 1990. We pointed out that on the day in question she had been ridden at and cropped several times before she had sought to defend herself by dragging a rider to the ground, and that subsequently she had been knocked unconscious with the bone end of a crop and taken to hospital with a brain contusion.

Llewellyn has now scored a minor victory. This month, she and three other saboteurs received damages from Surrey police for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment. They had been arrested outside the Surrey Union Foxhunt's kennels in September 1991, where they had been observing the conditions in which the dogs were being kept, and held at Dorking police station for several hours.

Colin Skilton, Russell Horsfield, and Sean Creaghan each received £250, while Llewellyn received £400. Surrey police's legal costs arising out of this pointless abuse of their power were roughly £15,000.

THE CONDUCT of Cheshire police monitoring the activities of hunt incidents grows ever more bizarre.

On 30 January, at a meet of the Cheshire Foxhunt at Caveley, near Winsford, a male saboteur from Crewe in his early twenties required hospital treatment after he was set upon by a hunt follower with an iron bar. He sustained a fractured jaw, while another saboteur suffered a broken nose and two black eyes. Although several police officers were in a neighbouring field, they refused to seek details of the person who had committed the assault. Only now are they asking to see photographs of hunt followers taken by the saboteurs with a view to making further inquiries.

This follows the police reaction to an incident at the Boxing Day meet in which a female saboteur was knocked unconscious with a walking stick. The assault was pointed out to a police video crew, but rather than use their video camera to film hunt followers for identification purposes, they merely continued to film the saboteurs.

When eight saboteurs turned up at the police station the next day, at the invitation of the police, to make a formal complaint, they were promptly charged with violent disorder. On 6 February Cheshire police arrested six saboteurs who were held in mobile cells for three to four hours before being released without charge. The saboteurs are now considering legal action.

THE NOTORIOUS Bicester and Whaddon Chase foxhunt has reinforced its reputation for violence after an Oxford hunt saboteur was deliberately pushed into the path of an oncoming all-terrain vehicle.

Tony Humphries was attending a meet near Kirtlington on 6 February when he was pushed by a hunt follower. Although he was knocked down by the vehicle and had to be taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, he was not badly injured.

Interestingly, his assailant — Richard Cheshire — has form. Last year he was convicted at Buckingham crown court of affray and causing actual bodily harm. He had attacked a saboteurs' car, repeatedly punching two of the saboteurs inside, smashed one of its windows and tried to drag a saboteur through it, and overturned the car down an embankment while there were still saboteurs inside. He had also damaged a video camera. However, he was unable to damage the video camera which filmed his assault on Tony Humphries last weekend.

'Reynard'

EYE TV

Survey of National Viewing Habits

(Radio Times, 30 Jan-5 Feb)

THE FRONT cover of last week's *Radio Times* carried the teasing flash: "Amazing Poll Results".

Readers following that cross reference came upon a full-page "Special Report" written by Polly Toynbee, supposedly one of the most intelligent and learned journalists of her generation and, even now, one of the most intelligent and learned journalists in *Radio Times*.

Polly was announcing the "astonishing results" of *Radio Times*'s "survey of the nation's viewing habits", conducted by NOP, an organisation still fondly remembered for the "astonishing results" of its survey of the nation's *voting* habits eight months ago, which so accurately predicted the current Labour government.

Even so, the poll does tell us something about, respectively, opinion pollsters, the state of *Radio Times* and the relationship between viewers and their television sets.

One of the findings of the survey has already been hysterically reported in the tabloid press. This was the discovery of NOP/*Radio Times* that 15 per cent of people ("Nearly one in seven," as Toynbee excitedly embroiders it) would not part with their television sets for a million pounds. This statistic was predictably used to present a chilling picture of Britons as couch potatoes. In fact, the result merely establishes both the pollsters and anyone who took the query seriously as potatoheads.

Statistically shaky on the big one, the survey must be approached sceptically with regard to its other findings. *Radio Times* was also, for example, astonished that — offered a choice of a television, a portable telephone, a radio and newspapers to keep them company on a desert island — only 21 per cent of people opted for the box while 36 per cent of respondents chose the telephone. This result has been used to construct a theory — directly opposed, as it happens, to the not-for-a-million-pounds one above — that, nation of couch potatoes though we are, this preference for the telephone is proof of a durable need for human communication.

Read our lips, NOP and *Radio Times*. Taking the question entirely literally — trained, perhaps, to do so by all those TV quiz shows they watch — people chose the telephone so that they could ring someone up *to get them off the desert island*. The really frightening statistic is that 21 per cent of people saw being stranded on a desert island as a chance to catch up on the progress of *GMTV*.

The section on politics, meanwhile, managed to ask the question the wrong way round. Respondents were asked which people they saw on TV they would like to elect to the cabinet. The better inquiry would be which members of the cabinet you wished to see on popular TV shows. William "People's Friend" Waldegrave to present *That's Life!* John Major in *Chef!* (*Geddit?*) Anyway, in the real survey, a third said Trevor McDonald and a quarter Michael Buerk, which was actually a halfway interesting result. For, if it has any validity, it establishes that newsreaders — who, in recent months, have mainly read out details of the government's lack of control over the nation — are able vicariously to present themselves as figures of compassion and authority. Unless... unless... you don't think, do you, that viewers believe Buerk and McDonald *are* politicians, but currently excluded from the cabinet?

Certainly, the third winner in this category suggests a certain denseness in the sample. Scriptwriters Marks & Gran pour satirical bile in to the creation of the most awful Tory ever in Alan B'Stard of *The New Statesman* and — what do you know? — 20 per cent think he should be in the Major administration.

God, they probably think George in *Drop The Dead Donkey* should be director-general of the BBC. Come to think of it, George in *Drop The Dead Donkey* is director-general of the BBC. And Sally in *Drop The Dead Donkey* is clearly now editing *Radio Times*.

MEDIA NEWS

THE FIASCO surrounding Sunset Radio, Manchester's absurd "ethnic" FM station, rolls on.

Eye readers will recall that Sunset is run by colourful Iraqi businessman Hassan Al-Jaizani, who is currently unable to trade shares owing to a court injunction taken out while creditors seek repayment of various loans made to prop up the ailing station.

Earlier this year members of the radio licensing authority met to consider revoking the Manchester station's licence on the grounds that there has been wholesale deception over the shareholding. This may be connected with various untraceable shareholder groups such as the so-called Pooshtoom Organisation, the Afghan Welfare Association or even the North West Frontier Organisation. Listeners might also wonder how unemployed Falah Al Jaizani, son of Sunset's impresario Hassan Al-Jaizani, paid for 150,000 £1 shares out of his dole money.

With the dark days arriving for Sunset, various directors have begun to quit. But when one creditor, the Expansion (Manchester) company, tried to recoup its £8,000 worth of shares, it was told that its equity no longer had any value since the firm had already received commensurate value in "free" plugs over the air.

The radio licensing authority has given the Al-Jaizanis a few weeks to present themselves at its Covent Garden headquarters — or the station could be off the air.

POPEYE

LONG-SUFFERING creditors of Factory Communications must have been delighted to hear that the receiver is on the point of selling the company's assets to London Records. But wait...

A closer look reveals that London Records is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Polygram conglomerate, and Polygram has been up to its corporate neck encouraging former Factory chairman Anthony Wilson in his megalomaniac ambitions.

Not only did Polygram's outgoing chairman, fun-loving Maurice "Obie" Oberstein, endorse a deal barely a year ago to acquire international licensing rights from Wilson, but the company was intent on buying into the set-up right up to the point where receivers were appointed.

The upshot of the manoeuvre is that both Wilson and Polygram walk away from the estimated £2.5 million of debts, and the remaining assets are picked up for, er, a song. Indeed, London Records is already deep in negotiations to sign former Factory acts New Order and Happy Mondays directly to the company. By a miraculous coincidence they were not formally signed to Factory, thereby depriving the receiver from capitalising upon the main assets of the company.

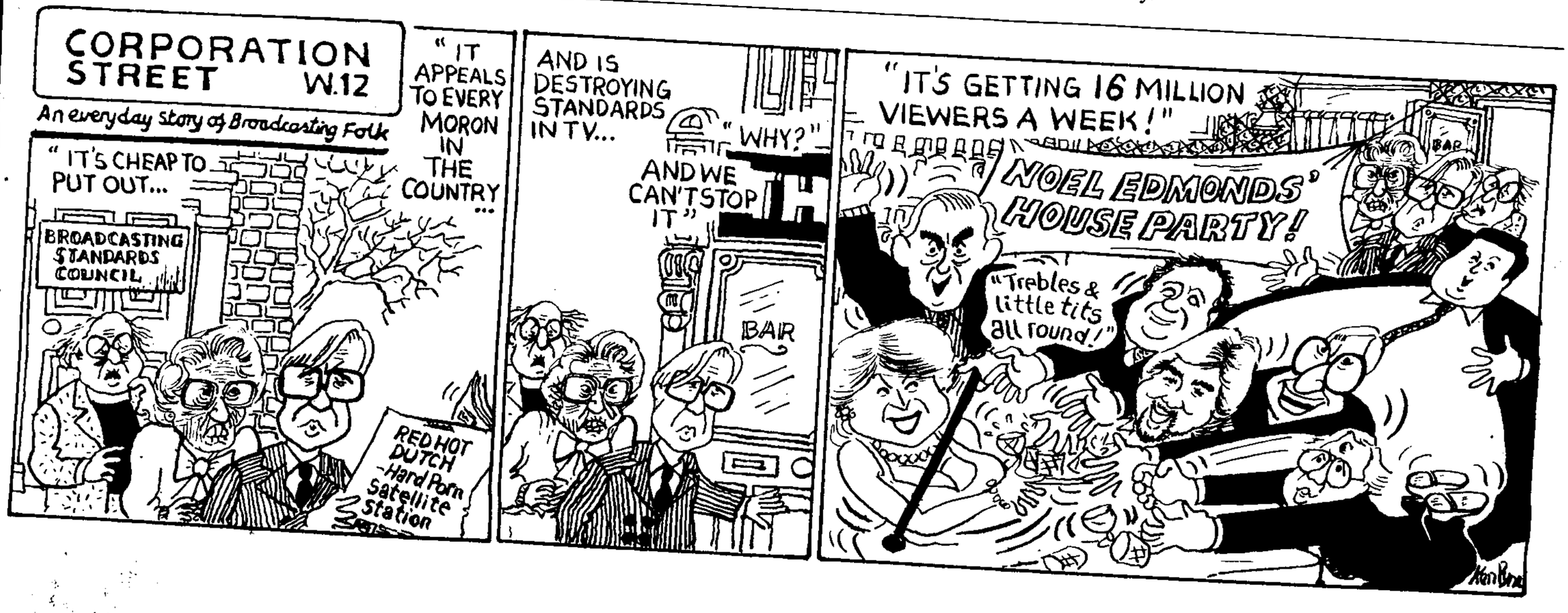
Popeye predicts the imminent appointment of Wilson as a consultant to London Records to complete the satisfactory outcome of the debacle — satisfactory, that is, for everyone except creditors who are left licking their wounds.

MORE NEWS of *Zoo Time with Jonathan Ross*, his desperately original Saturday night "chatshow" that is certainly desperate but not quite as original as one supposes.

Its send-up of Hollywood news segments bear an uncanny resemblance to the antics of Bob Hooverburg and Jackie Wissenschatz, the two spoof West Coast TV presenters who once appeared on BSB's dismal satire show, *Up Yer News*.

Interestingly, several of the Bob and Jackie pieces, written and performed by Paul Turner and Richard Shearer, were filmed beside the swimming pool in the back garden of one Miles Ross, Jonathan's brother. And, according to a Ross insider, in 1991 a Jackie and Bob showreel was sent to Miles, who passed it on to Channel X, when the company was trying to revamp Jonathan's then chatshow.

That Channel X (prop: J. Ross) is behind *Zoo Time*, which is now doing a Bob and Jackie — without the original writers or performers — is one of those bizarro coincidences that make TV so whacky.


CORPORATION STREET W.12
An everyday story of Broadcasting Folk
"IT'S CHEAP TO PUT OUT...
BROADCASTING STANDARDS COUNCIL
"IT APPEALS TO EVERY MORON IN THE COUNTRY..."
RED HOT DUTCH Hard Porn Satellite Station
AND IS DESTROYING STANDARDS IN TV...
"WHY?"
AND WE CAN'T STOP IT"
BAR
"IT'S GETTING 16 MILLION VIEWERS A WEEK!"
NOEL EDMONDS' HOUSE PARTY!
"Trebles & little tits all round!"

LUVVIES

Joan Plowright won the award for best supporting film actor/actress. She said: "I think this is probably the luckiest night of my life. I have seen the other nominees, and I think this award should be broken into little pieces and given to all of us."

The Independent

"Quentin [Tarantino] came to me with a brilliant piece of writing. His screenplay breaks up the structure of matter like a Picasso. It also explores issues that concern me in my own existence — the need to trust somebody, the need to love somebody, the need for redemption. No, not redemption. That's a word that has been so over-used, it's lost its meaning. It's like me saying, 'Good morning, hello, how are you?', and all the time, I'm walking straight past you. I prefer to use the expression, to do what's right."

HARVEY KEITEL
Evening Standard

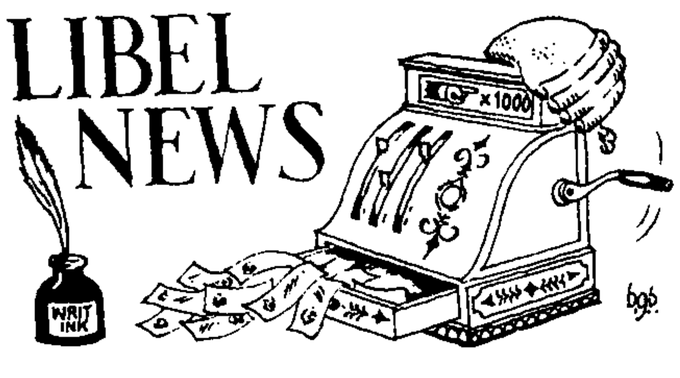
"I would say that I've been earthed. One of the most attractive male qualities is the capacity to earth a volatile woman..."

EMMA THOMPSON
(on Kenneth Branagh)
Newsweek

Submitted by Ajay Patel, Tony Norman, Jill A. Browne.

An occasional column featuring gems from the acting profession. £10 for similar submissions.

LIBEL NEWS



THE CHOICE of solicitors Biddle & Co to act for the prime minister in his libel action against the *New Statesman and Society* was partly to avoid using Peter Carter-Fuck & Partners, whose absurdly excessive bill for organising press information and taking eviction proceedings against Norman Lamont's unwanted tenant caused such a stink.

However, the prime minister's office probably has no idea that the libel partner at Biddle & Co, Eton and Balliol-educated David Hooper, was formerly a partner at Carter-Fuck's. And whenever a journalist writes a profile of Carter-Fuck, he will invariably interview Hooper on a non-attributable basis and be treated to all manner of imprecations about Hooper's former boss — particularly his penchant for overcharging.

Yet Hooper himself is not without experience in this aspect of legal practice, as *NSS* will soon find out. In 1986, when the *Eye* successfully had a Carter-Fuck bill (including counsel's fees) taxed (ie independently assessed by a taxing master), it was reduced from £94,500 to £42,300. David Hooper had been the partner responsible for the case and logging the hours.

More recently Hooper incurred the displeasure of one of his clients, Labour MP George Galloway. Just before Christmas, Hooper obtained a £150,000 global settlement (damages and costs) in a fairly straightforward libel claim against Mirror Group Newspapers. Galloway has received the bulk of this sum, but Hooper is claiming costs of £50,000, even though Galloway himself did most of the background research. Galloway is not prepared to accept that Hooper incurred £50,000-worth of costs and is being urged by veteran libel solicitor Oscar Beuselinck to have Hooper's bill taxed.

SIR Ivan Lawrence QC, Tory MP for Burton and chairman of the home affairs select committee, has been involved in a nasty spat in his constituency.

Local painter and decorator Ian Jones recently organised some decorating work on Lawrence's home. The job, which included painting the tops of the new wrought-iron railings gold, took three months to complete and involved up to six men working a total of 500 hours. But when Jones put in his bill for £9,700, Lawrence disputed it and refused to pay more than £5,000. Jones put in a request for a default summons at the local county court and complained to the *Burton Mail*.

Sir Ivan was livid. He had a grovelling letter of retraction drafted and threatened that if Jones did not sign it he would tie him up in protracted and costly libel proceedings. Despite receiving legal advice to the contrary, Jones bowed to the pressure and signed the letter — which was published in the *Burton Mail* and read like a Soviet show-trial confession.

It apologised for all sorts of things that had not been said in the *Burton Mail* article — for example, that Sir Ivan was "dishonestly refusing to pay" for the decorating job and that he had attempted to use his position as an MP or as a barrister to put pressure on Jones to settle the contractual dispute on unfair terms. Jones gave his "solemn word" that he would "never again publish the allegations complained of orally or in written or other permanent form to anyone." Jones withdrew his summons and accepted £1,500 on top of the £5,000 that had already been paid instead of the £4,700. He also thanked Sir Ivan, in the grovelling letter, for his "understanding and forbearance".

"I am your Workfairy Godmother — grab the broom, Cinders"

HACKWATCH No 39:

Pass Notes

ONE OF THE great unsung influences on modern British journalism is the *Sunday Correspondent* magazine. During its brief life, it pioneered several features which have since become maddeningly ubiquitous.

One was the Questionnaire, in which each week a celebrity would answer such questions as "What keeps you awake at night?" and "What objects do you always carry with you?" Clones of this feature now appear everywhere from *Q* magazine to *UK Press Gazette*.

Another was "Pass Notes", billed as "a brief outline each week of the lives and works of contemporary writers which may be of use to those who have neither the time nor the inclination to read modern literature, and feel exposed."

It died with the *Corrie*, but in the past few months it has suddenly returned to life and spread through Fleet Street like bindweed. For those who have had neither the time nor the inclination to study it, here is a brief outline of the phenomenon:

Whom to blame for latest eruption of this format: Alan Rusbridger, features editor of the *Grauniad*. Looking for something to jazz up his new tabloid Section 2 last autumn, he recalled the old *Correspondent* feature and decided to run a similar daily column, covering not only writers but any other celebs or nine-day wonders who happened to be topical. The title he chose for it, imaginatively enough, was "Pass Notes".

Purpose of Pass Notes: Strictly for laughs. The column seldom bothers to summarise its subjects' career or opinions. Here, for instance, is part of last Thursday's piece from the *Guardian* on Bob Dylan: **"Bob's problem is:** He's been Bob Dylan for so long that they won't let him be anybody else. **Least likely to do:** Marry a nice Jewish girl and open a bagel factory. **Least likely to say:** Anything, especially 'I love you London, you're a beautiful audience.' "

Why does a supposedly intelligent newspaper fill its pages with such drivel? Good question. Presumably it's something to do with the theory that today's readers have a maximum attention span of three minutes, and so all journalism has to be cut up into bite-size snacks.

It is a jokier version of the format pioneered by the *Sun* in the 1970s: "Twenty things you never knew about..." This, of course, was later copied even by "serious" newspapers such as the *Observer*, whose "Lowdown" feature was sub-titled "Twenty Things You'll Need to Know About..." Why you would *need* to know 20 things about, say, Paul McCartney was never explained.

Relentless and confusing proliferation of the gimmick: The *Grauniad* began running "Pass Notes" last October. At the beginning of January, the *Sunday Times* Style section launched an identical column — the only difference being its title, "A Bluffer's Guide". Simultaneously, the *Mail on Sunday*'s colour supplement *You*, under its imaginative new editor Dee Nolan, introduced a Pass Notes-style column promising "all you need to know to become an instant expert on..." Its title? "Bluffer's Guide."

Any other takers? Yes indeed. The *You* column, whose original working title was "One Minute Guide", was to have been written by Mitchell Symons, the hack responsible for the *Sunday Times*'s "Connections" feature (which, ironically, was dropped to make way for "A Bluffer's Guide"). But la Nolan was unimpressed by his dummy-runs. So Symons trotted downstairs in the Associated Newspapers building and sold the idea to the *Evening Standard* — complete with the title he had pinched from Nolan. "Mitchell Symons's One-Minute Guide to...", for which he is being paid £35,000 a year, made its debut in the *Standard* on 1 February. It is exactly the same as every other Pass Notes or Bluffer's Guide.

A strange coincidence: On 10 January, in its second week of existence, the *Sunset Times*'s Bluffer's Guide was about Clive James. The following Sunday, the subject of *You* magazine's Bluffer's Guide was... Clive James.

A legal hiccup: For decades a small publishing house called Ravette has produced a series of books called "The Bluffer's Guide to..." Understandably, Ravette was not best pleased by developments at the *Sunset Times* and *Mail on Sunday*. Messrs Sue Grabbit & Runne sent minatory letters to both newspapers. Thus, only a month after their inauguration, the two columns have both been obliged to change their name. The *Sunday Times* one is now masquerading as "Brief Lives". *You* magazine, having toyed with such alternatives as "Three Minute Culture" and "At a Glance", has now plumped for "Crib Sheet". (Because of the mag's early deadlines, the "Bluffer's Guide" logo will continue to appear for another couple of weeks.) A crib sheet is, of course, a species of pass note.

Publications which are not yet running clones of Pass Notes: *Horse and Hound*; *Financial Times*; *Salisbury Review*; *Sunday Sport*.

Thing an editor is most likely to say on being offered such a column: "I like it!"

Thing an editor is least likely to say: "What's the point in wasting space on a feeble imitation of something that everyone else does?"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

LAMBETH

IN THE FUSS surrounding the "hot" news that fraud and corruption are rife in Lambeth, some interesting points have been overlooked.

The loony left council's chief executive, Herman Ouseley, recently announced that an internal report into the running of the town hall's housing repairs and highways departments found that more than £10 million of public money had been mis-spent on unauthorised contracts and redundancy payments. An "independent" inquiry, set up by the council, is now in place.

Strangely, press reports about the latest Lambeth farce failed to mention that in 1987 similar public hand-wringing took place following publication of a report about abuse of power and lack of proper auditing procedures — in the same departments. That report recommended urgent action and suggested various council departments be closed down. Nothing happened, and by the time Ouseley took over as chief executive the controversy had been forgotten.

Being a good public servant, Ouseley presumably began tackling the 1987 scandal as soon as he took office. Indeed, he has expressed his sadness at the length of time it has taken to investigate fraud involving housing repairs and civic maintenance, and claims that he ordered reports into the departments' workings back in November 1991. Yet it wasn't until Ouseley had been head of Lambeth for nearly three years that he went public.

By a remarkable coincidence, only a few weeks previously Ouseley had been appointed the new £60,000-a-year chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. He leaves Lambeth in April with the council in chaos, £157 million in debt, and the town hall corridors crawling with m'learned friends' scandal sniffers. Only a cynic would suggest that Ouseley's interviewers at the CRE might not have held him in such high regard had the latest Lambeth farce surfaced just before his application was received.

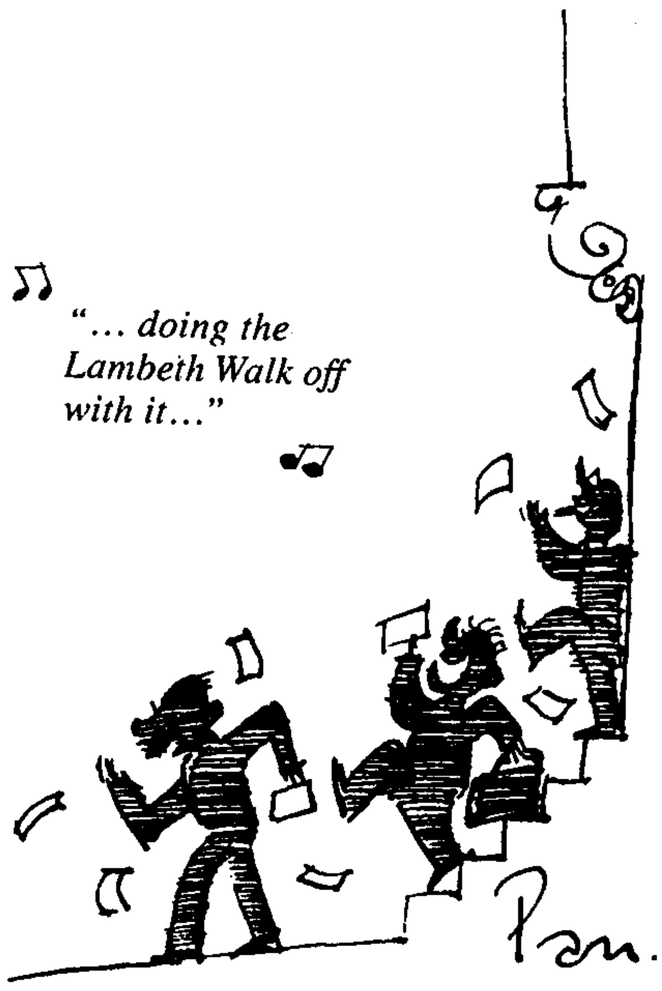
BIRMINGHAM

THE strange finances of Britain's most right-on housing association have come in for renewed scrutiny after a woman was found dead in one of its hostels — where she had lain for over a week.

Jennifer Cope died of meningitis at Manwoods Close, which is registered with the department of social security as a residential care home. Manwoods Close is run by the infamous Harambee housing association — which had been claiming the DSS residential care home rate of £190 a week for Jennifer and all the other residents.

Harambee controls 400 houses and flats, mainly for Afro-Caribbeans, especially the elderly and mentally ill. It is already under investigation over losses of £250,000 including £70,000 in uncollected rents and £50,000 in mortgage arrears.

But Manwoods Close is not a care home. It is a half-way house offering minimal care for people recovering from mental illness and other problems. It means Harambee was claiming huge amounts of DSS cash to care for people who were getting almost nothing for it.



Jennifer probably died on or around Christmas Day, but none of the staff in the "home" found out until her family demanded to know where she was — on January 4. It is possible she was ill for days beforehand — but with no one on hand to care for her. Now, even the normally supine DSS has stirred itself to investigate, in parallel with a probe by the Housing Corporation, the government body which administers housing associations.

Meanwhile on a happier note the *Eye*'s revelations about Harambee's chair, Mrs Nancy Johnson, who doubles up as chief officer in Birmingham city council's wimmin's unit, have led to some frenzied action. The annual women's festival — a beano for an oddball assortment of politically correct types at the poll taxpayers' expense — is now under urgent investigation over suggestions that some of the events billed to the city may never have taken place.

Johnson's boss, Councillor Bill Gray, announced the inquiry through clenched teeth — while denouncing the *Eye* for its "gutter journalism". We shall see.

BIZARRE plots are nothing new in Birmingham city council — but deputy leader Councillor Ken Barton's plot is green and has grass growing over it.

The plot in question is a patch of land, rented from his very own city council, which has dramatically enlarged his garden — for the grand sum of 5p a year.

Not-so-red Ken has been quietly renting the land for years, and every year the city has been sending him a bill for 5p — even though the clerical work costs around £5 a time.

Readers with long memories may recall how Labour leader Sir "Dick" Knowles actually *bought* a chunk of land from the city to enlarge his garden. Strangely, council work gangs went on maintaining the land — without Sir "Dick's" knowledge, of course.

In Ken's case the city bought the land for roadworks — roadworks which Ken was none too keen on. The plans were dropped.

POLICE 5

WITH the Cardiff Three released, attention is now focussing on other Welsh cases where Dai Knacker's long arm may have over-reached itself.

The dodgiest convictions appear to be those of Ellis Sherwood, Michael O'Brien and Darren Hall, who are serving time for the murder of Cardiff newsagent Phillip Saunders in 1987.

Their jailing gave former South Wales chief superintendent Don Carsley, who reputedly keeps a photo of the murdered Phillips on his mantlepiece, a 100 per cent conviction rate before his retirement. Unfortunately Carsley's copy-book was blotted by the court of appeal's release of the Darvell brothers, whom he had rounded up but who were wrongly convicted of the murder of a Swansea sex-shop proprietor in 1986.

As with the case of the innocent Cardiff Three, there is no forensic evidence connecting Sherwood and Co with the crime. They were convicted on a dodgy confession corroborated by two supergrasses.

The confession came, interestingly, from one of the accused, Darren Hall, an unfortunate character who actually *wanted* to be back in jail anyway; and the corroboration came from two supergrasses, one of whom claimed he heard Sherwood confess to his sister at visiting time — even though he was sitting on the other side of the hall while on semi-solitary Rule 43 at the time.

VISITING a police station in Liverpool can seriously damage your health — and taxpayers' wealth when large sums are paid out in compensation to victims of police beatings and intimidation.

Last month a Liverpool jury awarded 59-year-old William King a whopping £108,500 damages after he successfully sued Murkeyside's chief constable for false imprisonment, assault and malicious prosecution.

Mr King had visited Tuebrook police station in July 1990 to see his son who had been arrested. William King went in on walking sticks because he had a spinal condition — but he left the nick with injuries that put him in a wheelchair.

Mr King claimed that he had been thrown through a set of doors and kicked in the back by the custody sergeant, Karl Kneale. Police witnesses dismissed this version of events as a "fiction". According to them, Mr King, of his own free will, miraculously lifted his sticks into the air and collapsed in a heap on the floor. Evidence from the medical profession begged to differ, however, and it convinced the jury that injury was caused by a boot boy in blue.

The size of the damages award may well be reduced, but the judge remarked that it reflected the "outrage" of the jury at being lied to by a police officer.

This is not the first time Sergeant Karl Kneale has had trouble with his boots. In the mid-1980s, photographs in national newspapers *appeared* to show him kicking protestors outside Walton jail. A trial at Preston crown court found him not guilty and he subsequently sued two tabloids for publishing the misleading pictures.

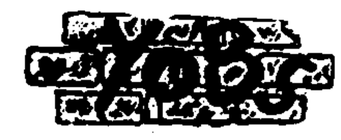
Sgt Kneale has now been transferred to Murkeyside's police HQ. The episode has made local beaks even more sceptical of accepting police evidence. Even the most staid members of the bench are now demanding that chief constable Jim Sharples knocks his knackers into shape.

THE KING case isn't the only example of rough "justice" on Murkeyside.

The day before his award, a disabled black woman from Toxteth was granted £2,500 by a Liverpool judge for maltreatment received at the Admiral Street police station. She had gone there to complain about racial harassment, but didn't realise she was consulting experts on the matter.

The incident highlights the increased friction between chief constable Sharples and representatives of the local black community. In a letter to peripatetic MP Bob "Shanghai" Parry, Jim Sharples characterised the Liverpool 8 law centre as an unrepresentative group of anti-police trouble makers.

"Sunny" Jim doesn't shine too brightly in the field of community relations. In 1989 he wrote a similar letter to the Methodist centre in Toxteth describing their attitude toward the police as "objectionable".



HUSBAND

Before I give you the cash I'll have to see some identifation mr slattery
What like?
Well something with your name on it
This do?!
CASHIER
BOB SLATTERYS BASTARD ARMY
CASHIER

Sally Deedes

ADRIAN GRAY was in the Waterside shopping centre in Lincoln when he was approached by someone claiming to be a "professional charity fundraiser".

Mr Gray bought what he thought was a £1 charity raffle ticket (its cover carried a reproduction of the familiar organ donor card), and it was only when he returned home that he examined it more closely.

Inside were illustrations of prizes to be won: first prize was a new Suzuki Vitara (value £12,000); second prize a speedboat (£5,000); and monthly prizes like golfing weekends in Scotland, a weekend at Euro Disney and fishing holidays in Ireland.

The prizes are being offered by an outfit called Heartbeat International, which, not yet a year old, has offices in Birmingham and London and describes itself not as a charity but as an organisation that "freely donates to selected humane charities".

A competitor has to answer two questions and a "tie-breaker" to win a monthly prize, and Mr Gray found the questions distasteful. Contestants are asked to estimate the number of malnourished children in the world (no less than 150,000,000, no more than 250,000,000) and to "estimate the number of the children in the world's poorest countries who die before their 5th birthday" (no less than five million, no more than 25 million).

The small print lays out the rules but is vague about the main prizes — there was no indication, for example, when the draw might take place. What alerted Mr Gray, however, was the chairman's surprisingly frank message. Printed in the smallest legible type at the bottom of the rules, it said: "As a company we also support our own worthy cause. The purpose of this fund is to raise enough money for building or buying a home and headquarters for the furtherance of malnourished children (it is our intention to donate no less than £5,000 to this cause this competition year alone)."

Heartbeat, which is not a charity, is thus only legally bound to donate what must be a tiny proportion of its total revenue — given that the total value of the first two prizes amounts to £17,000 alone.

A spokesman for Save the Children said: "We have never heard of them and find their questions tasteless — we would certainly have nothing to do with them."

THE NEW brochure from the Eastern Electricity Board contains two confusing statements. Under the heading NEW GUARANTEED STANDARDS, ***it says: "When discussing with you the arrangement to call on you by appointment we will offer to do so before 1pm or after 1pm on the agreed day. If we do not make such an offer you are entitled to £20 from us, and if we do not arrive within the agreed period of the agreed day you're also entitled to £20 from us."***

This generous offer is closely followed, however, by a catch-all get-out clause under the heading GENERAL EXCEPTIONS TO OUR GUARANTEED STANDARDS. ***The exception? "When a visit or appointment relates to sale delivery or repair of appliances or any kind of electrical contacting work."***

CHARGEPAYERS in Devon have been receiving some interesting correspondence from Tiverton-based estate agents, Stags.

Having helped various West Country councils to assess the value of around 50,000 properties so they can be placed in the appropriate council tax band, the company wants to cash in on residents elsewhere in the county who fear that they may be paying too much.

For £25 those who are unhappy with their council tax band can invite Stags to inspect their property and advise on the likelihood of winning an appeal. For another £25 Stags will "submit a reasoned appeal to the valuation office" and negotiate with the district valuer to try to have the band altered. If that works, Stags will charge a £25 "success fee".

After all, what does the hapless householder have to lose? If a house is placed in a lower council tax bracket as a result of Stags' endeavour, the lucky resident will save about £75 a year, only the first saving going on Stags' bills.

Of course, Stags says nowhere in its leaflets that estate agents don't usually charge for valuations — nor that appeals to the town halls about one's council tax band are free.

UN NEWS

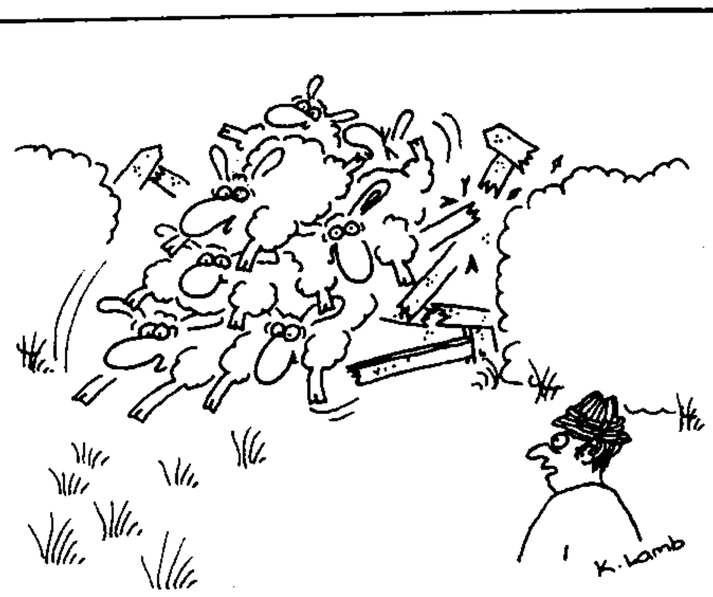
NO ONE can fault Lord Owen for inconsistency. His arrogance gets up the nostrils of everybody, without exception.

Turning up in New York to sell his patchwork map of Bosnia, he cannot understand why rookie secretary of state Warren Christopher did not immediately defer to his seniority. After all, Owen was appointed foreign secretary in 1977 and has pundited out on it ever since.

The rumour that he is being lined up for UN ambassador is highly inaccurate, although it would be surprising if he did not get more work from UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros Ghali, since David Stephen, former right hand man at the foreign office, is now writing speeches for the cop-out Copt.

It is not only Clinton and Christopher who have hesitated to sign up for the algebra of inhumanity represented by the Vance/Owen map. Bosnian president Izetbegovic has refused to go to New York for the peace talks to discuss it. That is hardly surprising — he only has to look at what happened to his deputy prime minister when he accepted the offer of a UN escort out to the airport at Sarajevo. He was repeatedly shot by the Serbs when the French troops guarding him opened the door of the armoured personnel carrier.

The UN commission of inquiry was even more of a whitewash than usual. It omitted to take evidence from the British officer who had reported that British and Ukrainian reinforcements were ordered away from the scene by a French officer who declared it to be a French affair. Cedric Thornberry, the chief UN political officer in the country, has been telling colleagues that the UN is the only friend the Serbs have got. If so, it may be not unconnected with his presence. Serving in a similar position in Namibia, the Windhoek newspaper *The Namibian* revealed that Thornberry was buying local property with loans from South African banks.



GATT CRASHERS

DOWN ON THE FARM

with 'New Muckspreader'

THE NEW European commissioner for agriculture is Rene Steichen of Luxembourg. He may be a vertically-challenged person from a small country, but he is responsible for the biggest annual budget any one human being has ever controlled.

M Steichen is no virgin in the farm-funding circus of the EC, having been Luxembourg's own minister for agriculture. His first pronouncements have caused deep satisfaction in farm lobbying circles. He says the CAP needs only slow and modest reforms, and that he opposes dogmatism.

He flatly rebutted John Major's assertion that the Edinburgh summit agreed to cut the CAP subsidy system, and points out the budget for gifts to farmers was increased by 18 percent while the politicians said the opposite.

THE ministry for agriculture has written to every MP telling them their upland sheep farming constituents will be rejoicing at their new grants on offer. But just consider how daft the sheep subventions are...

We could import mutton and lamb for exactly half the price of our own heather-fed balls of wool. The "hill farming compensatory amounts" (HFCAs) are yet another folly to keep people up obscure glens and moors when they could be doing something useful with their lives.

Mr Major's "free-market" government has just promised to raise sheep farmers' income by 90 percent in England and 60 percent in Wales.

"ARGENTINA joins grass sickness initiative" trumpets the press release. This means the EC has granted £120,000 to see if there is a link between the British horse disease "grass sickness" and the Pampas disease "mal seco".

Dr David Doxey (*sic*) of the Royal Dick Hospital, Edinburgh, will be co-ordinating the study. But as every horsey person knows, grass sickness is a by-product of world war one. As we were running short of cavalry horses for the kaiser's artillery to slaughter, we imported thousands of wild Argentine broncos. They brought the disease with them and it lingers on...

THE GOVERNMENT has launched its hedgerow incentive scheme — taxpayers' money will be given to farmers to encourage them to plant new hedges — and it is indeed shocking to realise that England lost 53,000 miles of these delightful linear nature reserves between 1984 and 1990. But hold on a minute. Didn't the government give grants to farmers to rip up hedges and create new Euro-sized fields? Er, yes. Which just goes to show that if you're in farming you can get a subsidy for anything.

THE government's privileged treatment of its chums at the National Farmers' Union goes far beyond the millions it dishes out each year in subsidies.

Long after Thatch put a stop to beer and sandwiches at Number Ten, John Major has been entertaining NFU president David Naish and his team to cocktails and canapés.

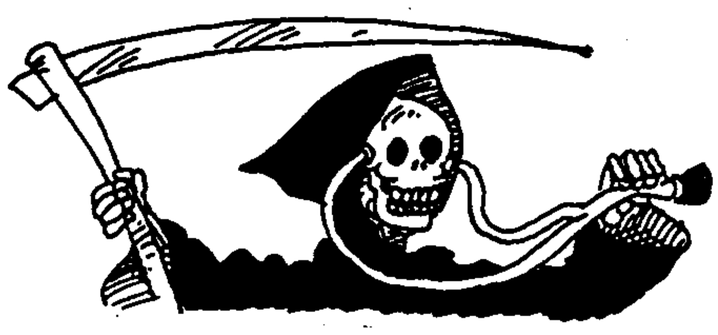
Now we learn that the barley barons of Covent Garden are to be given a top job coordinating the PM's food marketing initiative — a just reward for aiding and abetting successive UK governments in creating today's ruinous subsidy system.

Meanwhile the other rural union — the one representing 150,000 farm workers — continues to get the cold shoulder from the government, even though its members are losing jobs at the rate of 5,000 a year.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT

I CERTAINLY AM! JUST YOU TRY THESE! ONE'S MY NEW 'WITHERING WHITE' AN 'ONE'S AN EXPENSIVE FRENCH PLONK.
YOU'RE NEVER TRYIN' TO MAKE BLOODY WINE YOU DAFT BUGGER?
SEPTIC FARM VINEYARD
THE BEST OF BRITISH WINE
WELL, THIS ONE TASTES LIKE A FERRET PEED IN IT! AN' THIS ONE DOESN'T.
SEE!! ONCE I CATCH THAT BLEEDIN' FERRET I'VE CRACKED IT!
SEPTI FAR VINEYA
THE BE OF BRITI WIN



DOING THE ROUNDS

IN 1971, a former single mother called Virginia Bottomley prepared a report for the Child Poverty Action Group on "families with low income in London".

The section on health stressed that "sickness was a notable phenomenon among these families", and that many failed to use health service facilities because they "could not afford the charges".

Now, more than 21 years later, a secretary of state for health called Virginia Bottomley dismisses the scientific evidence linking deprivation and ill health as "defeatist talk" (Hansard, 22 October, 1992). What can have happened to change her mind?

● MRS BOTTOMLEY'S much-heralded ceasefire for NHS whistle-blowers has not lasted long. Having exhausted other routes, orthopaedic surgeon Neil Thomas wrote to local newspapers and patients about the lack of financial justification for the planned closure of the **Lord Mayor Treloar hospital (LMTH)** at **Alton** in **Hampshire**. He promptly received a letter from **Wessex RHA** director of public health and medical director of the NHS management executive, Dr Graham Winyard, telling him to shut up.

Dr Winyard's time might be better spent explaining why Wessex RHA isn't trying to retrieve the multi-millions it squandered on a redundant IBM computer system (see last *Eye*), which would keep the LMTH running for years.

● IN THE **West Midlands**, widespread ward closures threaten to scupper the government's patient's charter claim that no waiting list will exceed 18 months by April 1993.

The **Princess Alexandra Hospital** in **Redditch** has closed three wards; **Hereford hospital** has closed two wards; **Telford hospital** has 28 empty beds; and **Selly Oak** and the **Royal Orthopaedic** hospitals have closed one ward each. At **Dudley Road hospital**, surgeons have been forced to abandon clinical judgement and select patients according to where they live — and whether their GP is a fundholder or not. As junior health minister Tom Sackville put it: "We are victims of our own success."

● MR SACKVILLE'S televised assertions that the underfunding crisis only applies to routine admissions and that "all hospitals are treating all emergencies immediately" does not bear close inspection. In **Sheffield**, ward closures at the **Royal Hallamshire** and **Northern General** hospitals left emergencies waiting six hours on a trolley to get a bed or face diversion to **Chesterfield** or **Rotherham**. Emergencies at **Cornwall's Treliske** hospitals lined the corridors for seven hours recently, with no beds available at **St Austell**, **Redruth**, **Newquay**, **Derriford** and **West Cornwall** hospitals.

London's Emergency Bed Service has reported a 300 percent rise over the last decade of cases where GPs have been refused emergency beds. At **Northwick Park Hospital**, chief executive Michael Cole has circulated a memo to all consultants: "NPH may restrict emergency admissions to the catchment area which has recently been promulgated to all medical staff." Emergencies from outside the area are now refused admission.

Mr Cole also proposes "to close one infectious disease ward in the wake of substantial overrun in activity in this speciality". This overrun is because NPH is the nearest general hospital to Heathrow airport, and many infectious diseases are imported. If the ward were to close, patients with Lasa fever, cholera, AIDS and open tuberculosis who require special nursing, often in isolation, will be left hanging around casualty until an alternative parking place can be found. The risk of infection to other patients cannot be discounted.

In a later memo, Mr Cole attempts to clarify how bed closures and cancellations due to contractual overspend should be communicated to the public. "We have been asked by the region not to involve patients in discussions about contracting issues... it is not helpful to us or to patients to involve them in these discussions. Patients should never be given information about contracting and GPs should only be given information where absolutely necessary... Any patient who is cancelled after being given a date should receive the explanation that this is because of the high number of emergency admissions — issues about finance and contracting are not relevant here." Really?

● AT **MACCLESFIELD** hospital, porters have been offered s 12 percent reduction in pay and no holidays for a year — if they are successful in reapplying for their current jobs. The generous offer comes from Pall Mall Services, which takes over the portering contract from 1 April.

● **ST JAMES' University Hospital** in **Leeds** indulges in the distasteful habits of charging its employees an "administration fee" of £15 to supply a reference to mortgage companies inquiring as to the employment status of prospective borrowers. Perhaps the money is used to pay for the luxurious new linoleum and paint leading up the stairway to the managers' offices in the hospital's otherwise squalid Gledhow wing.

● THE **Royal Manchester Children's Hospital** now closes its canteen over the weekend, leaving parents and staff to fend for themselves. Nearby **Booth Hall** children's hospital has an even more radical cost-cutting plan to recoup a £1 million deficit — the entire hospital is to close.

● THE widespread downgrading of nurses (*Eye* 812) has backfired on managers at **Derby City General hospital** after a hearing ruled that their pay must be protected. DCGH had hoped to save £1.5 million by offering nurses and midwives the choice between cheaper grades and "voluntary" redundancy. The net effect would be to replace experienced seniors with inexperienced juniors. Now the hospital is threatening widespread redundancies, though hopefully not on the dangerously understaffed labour ward.

● IN *Eye* 803, M.D. drew attention to the high rate of post-operative astigmatism suffered by patients undergoing eye surgery at **Leicester Royal Infirmary**, and that the LRI was contemplating the purchase of an Excimer laser to correct such slip-ups. Both allegations were roundly rebuffed by the associate manager of the ophthalmology unit, Mr B.A. Mace (Letters, *Eye* 805). "The Leicester Royal Infirmary has no plans at this time for the future purchase of an Excimer laser," he wrote. The LRI is now advertising its brand spanking new Excimer laser in women's magazines and letters to local ophthalmologists!

● SIR Donald Wilson, new chairman of the **West Midlands health authority**, is poised to give the area another dose of the medicine prescribed by his bungling predecessor, Sir James Ackers.

Virginia Bottomley's decision to appoint Sir Donald, a close friend of Ackers, will provoke further outcries in Britain's biggest health authority. The Cheshire landowner and Lloyds member is a huntin', fishin' and shootin' Tory with similar methods to Ackers — as shown in his previous post as chair of **Mersey regional health authority**.

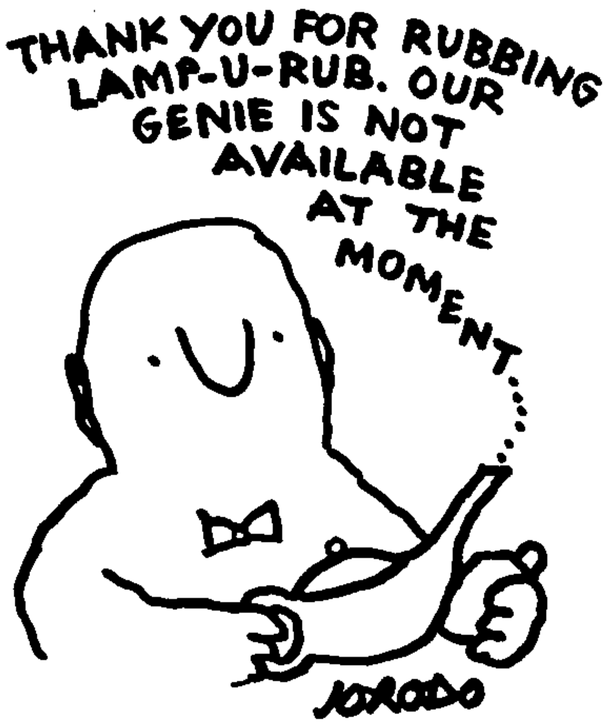
Wilson's methods there even provoked the anger of *Tory* MPs, including Nicholas Winterton. In the Commons he described Wilson as "a man who always has a hidden agenda. He is determined, come hell or high water, to get his way riding roughshod over the people of the area, their health provision and health services."

Winterton was referring to Wilson's sneaky appointment of Simon Cussons as chairman of **Macclesfield district health authority**: an appointment made over the heads of a wealth of well-qualified people who, unlike Cussons, lived in the area. Coincidentally, Cussons is also leader of the Tory group on the Cheshire county council. Acting health authority chairwoman Morwen Sowerbutts only heard of the appointment when she arrived to chair an interview panel to select the authority's new chief executive — and found Cussons in her place.

Even stranger than the treatment of Mrs Sowerbutts was the person chosen by Cussons as chief executive. Mrs Chris Hannah was the Mersey regional health authority's personnel officer, a Wilson acolyte who had herself vetted the other candidates before herself deciding to apply. Her name was added to the shortlist the day before the interviews at Wilson's prompting.

Nicholas Winterton's description of the Mersey appointments as "corrupt, political opportunism and profoundly unethical" can hardly be bettered. Nor can his description of Wilson as "dictatorial, domineering and a bully." Lucky old West Midlands!

M.D.



ENERGY NEWS

PROFESSOR Stephen Littlechild, director-general of the electricity industry, gets a bad press in the trade and industry select committee's report on the mining cock-up.

In fact, he has only ever said what the Tories themselves said when they privatised electricity: that anything that pleased the market was good — and if 30,000 miners lost their jobs, well, it wasn't his problem.

However, the Commons committee has commented: "We do not regard the way the director-general has discharged his duties as satisfactory." This makes Littlechild an ideal victim for Hezza, who now more than ever needs someone to blame. The unfortunate civil servant Robert Priddle, who was moved from energy policy as a punishment, did not have a high enough public profile as a scapegoat, but Littlechild would do admirably.

But there is a problem for Hezza — namely the electricity act, which was drafted by stumbling lawyers who worded its sacking clause in a way that prevents a minister from ever dumping his chosen servant for doing what he was told.

The act said (clause 1.3): "The secretary of state may remove any person from office as the director on the ground of incapacity or misbehaviour." With that phrase, the lawyers made Littlechild utterly fireproof. If they had omitted the reasons justifying removal, Hezza could have swooped. But once they named the reasons, they were, in the eyes of the law, stipulating that no other reason would do.

So can Hezza show the courts that the bearded professor is "incapacitated" (with its undertone of mental disturbance), or that he has been misbehaving, presumably with the secretaries in his Birmingham office, or perhaps with his deputy, the fragrant Ms Penny Boys? No. And anything less means the professor is unsackable.

It has been mooted that he might resign because the government's plan to subsidise coal goes against his monetarist principles. But the professor saw that one coming and in a letter to Tim Eggar, the energy minister, said he accepted a subsidy but wanted the extra cost to be paid by taxpayers instead of being added to electricity bills. While this will make little difference to most of the people who will have to pay, for the monetarists it provides a useful disguise for the fact that the market is being "distorted". So it would save face for the people who designed electricity privatisation — led by Stephen Littlechild.

The person who should really be sacked is Lord Wakeham, now leader of the House of Lords and the former energy secretary who presided over the sale of the electricity industry. It was he, on the basis of his knowledge of the energy scene and his reputation as a master tactician, who urged that it would be best to sack 30,000 miners in one swoop, early in the parliament so the scandal would be forgotten before the next election. The public uproar showed he had lost his touch.

Bankers

EVERY CLOUD, even in a recession, has a silver lining — especially for those in the legal and accountancy professions who do insolvency work.

While they may make money hand over fist, the inadequacies of insolvency legislation and the lack of control over the coterie of insolvency practitioners can cause substantial damage to small businesses and the country's manufacturing base.

John S. Bass, a Manchester-based family firm of export packers with subsidiaries dealing in timber imports and moulding, is a case in point.

In 1988 the firm and its subsidiaries — employing 130 people — should have been celebrating 150 years of successful business. Instead, Barclays, with whom it had banked for 80 years, put the firm into administration followed by receivership.

The bank asked for an independent assessment of the company and sent in accountants Ernst and Young to complete a survey. This was researched, drafted, typed and circulated within 48 hours — known in the trade as a "quick and dirty".

Barrie Chapman, then managing director of John S. Bass, asked Tony Christer, professor of operational research at Salford university, to overlook the report and his comments make fascinating reading — not least to Ernst and Young.

Professor Christer said: "The group is asset rich and my observation of the level and nature of activity, the order books, the market opportunities, the accounting and recording system and the commitment and quality of the staff, lead me to believe it is a most viable operation."

He went on: "It was recognised that the Bass Group had problems, but there were tactical and strategic plans by the directors to address both business and management issues. These plans were made available to investigators and to Barclays Bank plc. No objective discussion or informed comment as to the viability or appropriateness of the plans is forthcoming in the report." Professor Christer pointed out that since the bank had apparently needed the report in order to determine its future policy, the absence of a clearly argued case as to the future viability negated the point of the survey.

The survey, he said, overestimated the losses of the company *by a factor of five*. The report indicated the group to be losing money at a rate of £190,000 a year. "My own assessment based upon accounts available and my knowledge of the group suggested losses of no more than £36,000 — if indeed loss at all!" The report, he continued, "contains a number of errors, inaccuracies and omissions. This is to be expected of a superficial report compiled in considerable haste. What is not expected, however, is the consistency of negative bias in the errors, omissions and misrepresentations within the report — of such magnitude or potential that they did not go unchallenged.

"I find it rather alarming that parties to the report were informed of errors prior to 11 October [court hearing] and yet felt able to swear an affidavit on that date citing the report to be true and accurate." (Ernst and Young had said that two creditors had not been paid a total of £72,000 when in fact John S. Bass had paid both accounts ten days previously and Barclays had cleared the cheques. Despite this, a Mr Richardson, the senior loans manager of Barclays Bank, Manchester, had sworn that the amount was still outstanding — that "the account was true and accurate".)

Family members were denied the right to attend an extraordinary general meeting — requests for the proper notice of such a meeting to be sent to the shareholders were dismissed as being a "waste of time and effort" by solicitors for Ernst and Young.

The Bass factory was sold by the liquidators to Trafalgar House for £500,000 — when days before Mr Chapman thought he had secured a similar deal with Trafalgar for £1 million — nice work for Trafalgar, but not such a good deal for the shareholders.

When all the creditors had been paid there still remained an outstanding surplus of £1.2 million, underlining Professor Christer's analysis of the firm being asset-rich. Of that money nothing now remains — the vast proportion having gone to Ernst and Young, the rest being eaten up by legal fees.

Mr Chapman is now on income support and his family have sold up and left Manchester. The 120-odd staff have joined the dole queue.

Letters

Private Eye

Court case

Sir,

Re: John Major's libel case

My uncle and cousin are now both redundant miners. My mother has been waiting two years for a hip replacement and my aunt desperately needs a cataract removed. My niece and nephew have been unemployed since leaving college and my sister has been told not to expect a salary increase. My brother and sister-in-law are finding it difficult to cope with the extra burden of poll tax and dental bills. My home is about to be repossessed and my husband is having a breakdown. Our only son is talking of emigrating... "anywhere".

Therefore we are ALL *available for jury service.*

Yours sincerely,
MRS SUE BENNETT,

Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Just one leg

Sir,

Your item about the OBSERVER *(29 January) contains so many errors it is hard to know where to start correcting them. But here goes:*

1. The relaunched Magazine has succeeded in its primary aim of keeping the OBSERVER*'s sale comfortably over 500,000, reducing the gap with the* SUNDAY TIMES *and the* SUNDAY TELEGRAPH *and increasing our lead over the* INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY.

2. There are no plans for editorial redundancies.

3. I have every confidence in my arts and literary editors.

4. You are wrong about both the time and place of my lunch with the Magazine editor and neither of us said the things you said we said.

5. I went to the United States for a few days in November to deliver a lecture in Alabama, returning in time to edit that Sunday's paper. My fare was not paid by the OBSERVER, *but by the group sponsoring the lecture. I stopped off in New York for a day to attend a dinner of the Twentieth Century Fund and to catch the Matisse exhibition.*

6. The assertion you make about the lady whose name you drag into the story is malicious and unfounded. Furthermore, I am informed that she was not in the United States at the time of my visit. You have already involved her, equally falsely, in this way in the week of her mother's funeral. To persist in these lies is unspeakable.

7. As a matter of record, British Airways DID *kindly upgrade me to first class on one leg of my trip to the United States, so you're wrong about that too.*

You frequently mock the "sleazy tabloids", yet you carry more spiteful falsehoods per square inch than all of them put together.

Yours sincerely,
DONALD TRELFORD,

Editor, THE OBSERVER, *London SW8.*

Useful Member

Sir,

I read with interest your article on Allan Milburn MP in one of your recent issues. There are however a number of items I should like to take issue with.

1. The first is that Allan was not a member of the IMG. He did however share a house with people who were.

2. The Trade Union Studies Information Unit of which Allan was the director for a number of years has not closed down. It has problems with funding but remains a vibrant active organisation.

3. The campaign to rescue the shipbuilding industry in Sunderland, although it did fail, was impressive in the level of support it managed to gather behind it. The fact that it was Allan rather than the sitting MP for the area who ran the campaign is, I think, a testament to the way people judge his capabilities.

4. Finally Allan was not simply the chair of TUCND, he helped found it, acted as the treasurer for two years, was for a while one of the vice-chairs and remained a member of its EC until after his selection as an MP. My understanding is that he relinquished the post simply because he ceased to be active within the trade union movement at a level which would make participation in TUCND appropriate.

I am not qualified to assess the accuracy of your comments on his personal life, but it did strike me as being singularly tacky to include them in the article.

While Allan may be many things he is not stupid, he is not incompetent and he is not without principle as your article suggests. Being effective in politics means that one is bound to gather enemies and Allan has his fair share.

I think that you could be performing a very valuable service in letting people know the character of their MPs but your material can only be credible, I would respectfully suggest, if you check your sources.

Yours sincerely,
JIMMY BARNES,

Secretary, Trade Union CND, London N7.

Super Saver

Sir:

Piloti nominates Camden for the Most Philistine Local Authority of 1992.

However, the permission granted for the King's Cross site is subject to the Channel tunnel station being built. With British Rail having insufficient money for the future to run its entire system safely, it is unlikely that HMG will lend BR the money to build the station.

It is rumoured that on 1 April BR will announce the death of the entire scheme. Watch out for pensioners, children, etc. dancing in the streets of Camden shortly thereafter.

Yours faithfully,
CLLR ERNEST JAMES,

London Borough of Camden, NW1.

"These executive adventure courses really bring out the character, eh, Jenkins..."

Lookalike

Latimer

Jagger

Sir,

I have been much struck by the remarkable resemblance between the prime minister's friend, Clare Latimer, and Mick Jagger. Do you think by any chance they could be related?

Yours faithfully,
GODFREY PHILIP,

London NW3.

Dicky bird

Sir,

I've just picked myself off the floor and vowed to send a politically correct Valentine to your Literary Review(er) for the unprecedented non-sexist review of David Thomas's ludicrous tome (29 Jan). Pity about the volte face at the end, though. Child access? Which sex is lumbered with the lion's share of childcare? Unequal health care? Sorry about the well-woman clinics — could men please take over our contraceptive and childbirth duties? Female domestic violence? Like to see the statistics? (No, thought not.)

Never mind, even if this book review was a sinister plot to give female readers a premature cardiac arrest, I for one shall be handling your organ with increased pleasure in future.

Love and kisses,
CHRIS PARKER,

London N15.

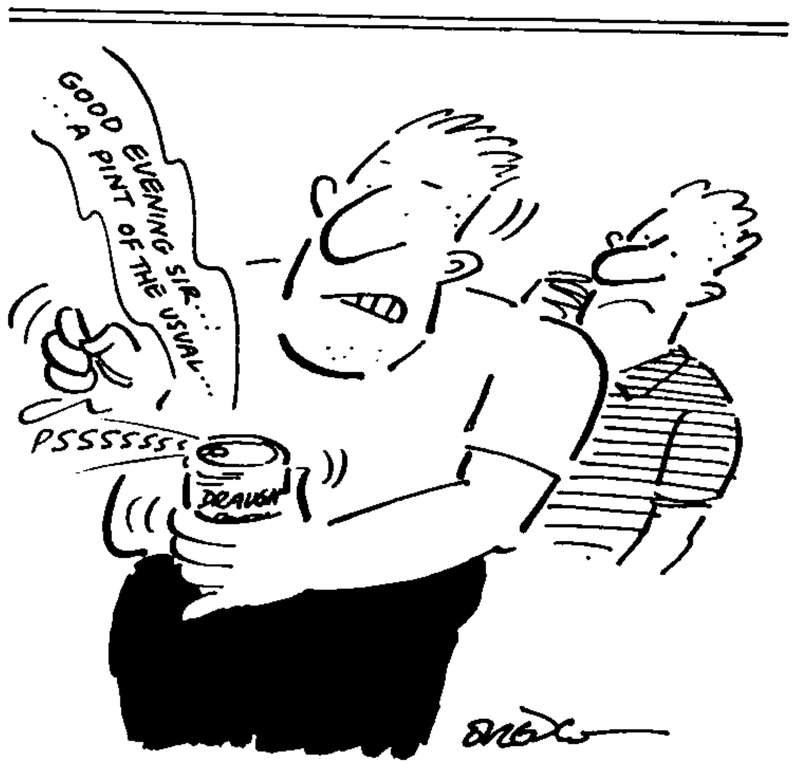
Spot the difference

Sir,

*I agree with A.N. Pierce (*EYE *812) and his concern caused by Piloti's terminal conservatism. Your otherwise excellent inquiring organ is marred by this pseudo-classic column. This week's pretentiousness (*EYE *812) is his spontaneous re-christening of Eric Mendelsohn as Erich Mendelsohn. A small irritation but as irksome and possibly worrying as a rash on any organ.*

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL MURTON,

London SE16.



"These 'Drink at Home' draught bitter cans are getting more sophisticated these days"

A broad is awful

Sir,

Julie Burchill's repertoire is a bit wider than you suggest: it does include Eastern Europe. She thinks Serbs are super; Croats are Fascist; Vaclav Havel is a precious little git who released a lot of perverts back into the community as soon as he became president.

Now it is true that the Croats have behaved in a very opportunist fashion in the current Bosnian war, and they do attract German neo-Nazi support. The atrocities of the Ustase are a matter of record. But some of the biggest fascists in Russia and Romania support the Serbs. I refer to the headbanger Zhirinovsky, Eugen Barbu, ex-court poet to Nicolai Ceausescu, now the anti-semitic editor of ROMANIA MARE, *a paper so disgusting that it makes the* SUN *look like the* MANCHESTER GUARDIAN *in its most saintly liberal period; also to the demented Gheorghe Funar, Mayor of Chij-Napoca who thinks that Ceausescu was too soft on Magyars and would like to do to the Magyars of his own city what Seselj and Arkon have done to Catholics and Muslims in Bosnia and Croatia. 25 percent of Chij-Napoca's citizens are Magyar.*

As for Havel, it is true that a lot of perverts were released by his amnesty; but they were never meant to be affected by it and it was a last act of Commie sabotage by the prison authorities.

There is a lot of intellectual jealousy here. Havel has written a lot of very witty and intelligent plays, which will be remembered long after Burchill's bodice-rippers will be forgotten.

Burchill's championship of the Jews is ironical in that it cannot be squared with her admiration for Stalin. In his last days he was a ferocious anti-semite who was preparing a great massacre of the Jews.

One of the most startling facts revealed by the recent profiles of Burchill in the press is that she has never been abroad. It shows.

Yours sincerely,
TOM CARTER,

Somerton, Somerset.

Lookunalike

Queen

Charles

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed, as I have, the extraordinary non-resemblance between Her Majesty the Queen and Ms Jeanette Charles, the "Queen lookalike" featured on the SUN*'s front page. Perhaps Her Majesty should consider legal action.*

Yours faithfully
ENA B. HISLOP,

Hotel Splendide, St. Lucia.

Floral tribute

Sir,

In Hackwatch No 38 Julie Burchill is quoted twice describing the Princess of Wales as "Orchidaceous". What La Burchill obviously doesn't understand is that the root of orchid is "orchis", the Ancient Greek word for testicle. Then again, I always thought Burchill's outpourings were a load of old bollocks, anyway.

Sincerely,
JAMES PETTS,

Stanmore, Middx.

Tracked down

Sir,

Despite Foster Yeoman's faux pas at its Crawley plant, the company does carry out at least one important service to the environment. It owns and runs its own trains between its Somerset quarries and London. Nearly all of the journey takes place on BR iron and, interestingly, took place under the old regulations for years before all this privatisation garbage was thought up.

Yours faithfully,
MARTIN EDWARDS,

Birmingham.

Porn to rule

Sir,

*Your piece on TV1000 (*PRIVATE EYE, *29 January) is wholly misleading insofar as the ITC is concerned. The ITC does not license TV1000 to transmit pornography; indeed, our programme code puts TV1000 at risk of substantial fines if they include pornography in the service we license.*

TV1000 chose to avoid ITC regulations by transmitting their pornographic films from Sweden. The law does not permit the ITC to impose licensing controls on services which are provided from other countries.

Yours faithfully,
JON DAVEY,

Director of Cable & Satellite, Independent Television Commission, London SW3.

Jocks strapped

Sir,

*Your correspondent C. Morrison's ironic defence (*EYE *812) of Renfrew district council fails to mention the equally culpable owners of the slowly crumbling and now demolished High Street edifice — Strathclyde regional council! What a pair of bedfellows — Scottish local government's adolescent two-tier twins (born 1974).*

For it was caring Strathclyde that closed the Canal Street railway link from Paisley to Glasgow in the early eighties and seven years later congratulated themselves on reopening it.

It was careful Strathclyde that was so out of touch with the local population that it sought to close the illustrious Paisley Grammar School and consequently got its regional fingers burned.

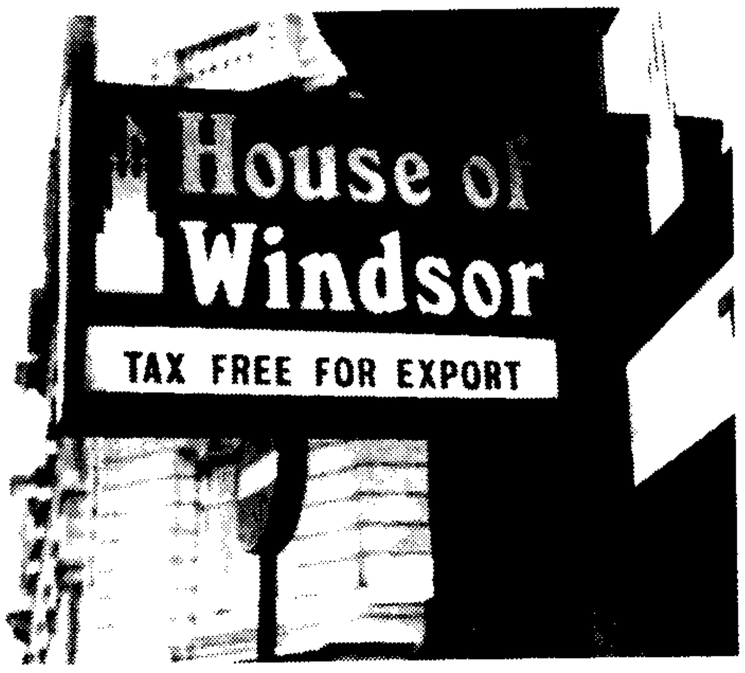
And it was cautious Strathclyde that filled the Scottish newspapers throughout January with full-page advertisements extolling its own virtues, assuring readers that it had its burned fingers on the pulse of the region and should therefore survive any Scottish Office attempt to abolish it.

A crumbling edifice indeed, Strathclyde deserves a taste of its own medicine — demolition.

Yrs etc.,
G. MORISON,

Paisley, Renfrewshire.

I-SPY *London, W1*



Submitted by M.L. Goodman. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Straight up

Sir,

Your organ makes very depressing reading. Is there no one out there who isn't bent?

Yours sincerely,
CHARLES LEE,

Haywards Heath, W. Sussex.

The old run-around

Sir,

Your item in Street of Shame claiming that our story about the illegality of the athletics track in Tokyo had already appeared in the NEW SCIENTIST *missed the whole point of our story... as did the NS.*

While offering a perfectly correct account of track development, Andy Coghlan in the NS swallowed at face value the bland, official IAAF explanation that the bard track was used in Tokyo in 1991 only because the championships were awarded in 1987 before the guidelines were accepted in September 1989.

As we showed, the IAAF knew long in advance that the track was too hard to conform to its own rules, yet cynically did nothing in pursuit of world records for their own championships.

Our article made it clear, and the NS did not, that IAAF technical officials knew at the very least a year in advance that the track in Tokyo was unlikely to pass its tests, having tested samples, which failed, in the London laboratory.

Yet even after their own representative had been prevented from testing the track itself in January 1991, having travelled from London to Tokyo, the IAAF officials, for reasons best known to themselves, took no further action about the track throughout the spring and summer of 1991.

Our article was a classic piece of investigative journalism: finding out the truth rather than blithely accepting lame explanations.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS NAWRAT,

Sports Editor, THE SUNDAY TIMES, *London E1.*

Thesaur point

Sir,

*Meyrick Jones has penned "Dr & Mme Roget" on the nameplate in his cartoon this week (*EYE *812) thereby inferring that Dr Roget was French.*

Dr Peter Mark Roget was a British physician and scholar. It follows, therefore, that his wife was unlikely to be titled "Madame".

On the other hand, of course, perhaps his wife was French. My reference fails me on this point.

Yours faithfully,
EMMETT WILSON,

Alcester, Warks.

SOS

Sir,

You filly fuckers! You eddicated lot at the EYE *ought to know that the long "s" was* NEVER, *repeat* NEVER *used as you have used it (in the spoof Camillagate conversation) — that is as the final letter of a word! Also, if you look closely, the "s" is not actually an "f". But I expect you knew that already.*

Yours,
R.M. HEALEY,

Royston, Herts.

Nom from Gnome

Sir,

Come, come, surely everyone knows Lord Gnome's christian name: Of course, it's Erogenous.

Yours,
JOANNA P.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"They [Millwall] never fail to disappoint me."
DAVID PLEAT, ITV (after Millwall's 6-1 win over Brentford)
(Gill Harvey)

Dougie Donnelly: *John Lowe, you're now three times world darts champion. What does that mean to you?*
John Lowe: *It means I'm three times world darts champion!*
BBC
(Sam P.W. Barton)

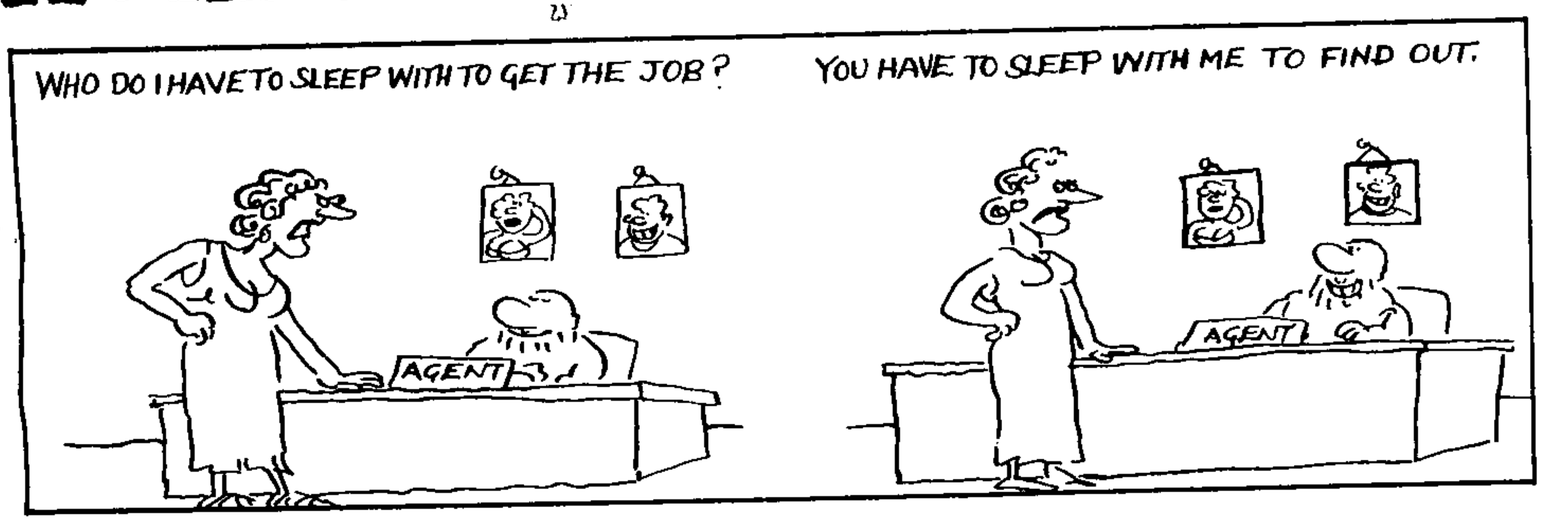
"It'll go the distance, and Lewis will win on a late stoppage."
FRANK BRUNO, ITV
(Neil Jones)

"And that's Cantona's fourth consecutive goal in the Premier League."
JOHN MOTSON, BBC1
(Oliver Tidy)

"The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television is tremendously important, both in photography, television and film."
SIR RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH, BBC
(Richard Selfridge)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



Letter from **Bratislava**

from Our Own Correspondent

NOBODY seems to have noticed, but Slovakia (independent since 1 January from the Czech republic after 74 years) is now run by a bunch of thugs only slightly more appetising than Heydrich.

The new government has conspicuously failed to distance itself from an inglorious past: the Nazi puppet regime run by Catholic priest Msgr Tiso until 1945, which ruthlessly persecuted Jews and gypsies. The failure to condemn this six-year flirtation with "independence" (Tiso was hanged as a war criminal) means the comparison stands. Slovaks were only narrowly prevented (by the Czechs) from putting up a statue to their national hero Tiso two years ago...

The *eminence noire* of the new regime is prime minister Vladimir Meciar, a former boxer, communist party *apparatchik* and sometime interior minister who is alleged to have worked for StB, the Czech state security. Some of his new team are equally controversial: culture minister Slobodnik trained with the fascist Hlinka guard and the SS before a 10-year exile to the USSR; the new economy minister Milan Cernak ran the aluminium smelting industry under the communists, responsible for much of the region's pollution.

Meciar is a slick talker who says whatever his supporters want to hear and promises the unattainable — a better financial deal, lower unemployment, a glorious place in history for the hitherto despised Slovak nation. His rise reflects the traditional, deeply Catholic and nationalist Slovaks' beliefs that they have always been screwed by someone else — by the more advanced Czechs, the Hungarians, the Jews — everyone.

Meciar has tapped unerringly into the inferiority complex and the need for an authority figure to resolve the turbulence of the past — fascist Tiso; nearly 50 years of communism; and then the rapid changes of the past four years when most Slovaks (favoured under the communists) resented the price demanded to move to capitalism and that the Czechs were doing better.

Unemployment, at 11 percent, is certainly higher than in the Czech lands, and the economic adjustment problems greater — but this is not some dark Czech plot. It is essentially because the communists sited huge, outdated and uneconomic arms industries here with assured (but now defunct) markets will take huge amounts of investment to turn around — if they ever can be.

The future — "a leap into a black hole", as some call it — does not look encouraging, even to Meciar supporters. There is a brain-drain of qualified professionals, both Czechs and Slovaks, to Prague; and the economic prospects are frightening. Until now we have been underwritten by $500 million a year, according to international bankers, by the Czechs. Now the funding will stop and it is hard to see who will invest in a poor, backward country that looks unstable and whose industries are crumbling behemoths. Until the split the Czechs received 90 percent of new investment.

The decision to divide the federal currency by 8 February, sooner than expected, seems certain to trigger a massive devaluation of the Slovak crown. Citizens have queued in their thousands to have their notes stamped "Czech" or "Slovak" (new banknotes have not yet been printed), and there is chaos in Bratislava as everyone tries to buy hard currency.

There have already been ominous signs that what western diplomats call "Meciar's natural bent towards authoritarianism" have been exercised — so far towards the large minority groups, notably the 600,000 ethnic Hungarians along the common border. Independent journalists have been sacked from key posts, and Meciar has tried to close the university of Turnava, seen as a symbol of academic freedom.

Some observers fear that when Meciar's economic policies fail, the regime could become sharply authoritarian, boosting tensions with more liberal and richer Czechoslovakia and jolting an already unstable region. Most play down the comparison with the murderous fall-out in what was Yugoslavia, but one leading Slovak intellectual said: "It would only need one Goebbels-type agitator to stir things up."

TRUE STORIES

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

DURING her interview the bride, Miss Iseza Akongo, said: "It is true that the music system blew up when we connected it to my uncle's lorry battery. Never mind, my father slaughtered two bulls and 15 hens and cooked 144 mudfish. But best of all was my husband-to-be hiring 52 bicycles on which the choir, the important guests, various village VIPs and the US Ambassador rode slowly through the countryside sounding their bells as they went so that the dancers didn't miss the music but danced in front of us, the women on the ox-carts and the men in the road."

SUED by Mr Dieter Korschgez, Ms Mizzi Handel, a "Creative Critic", said: "My group and I decided to present our version of Samuel Beckett's play Waiting For Godot. We hired the Goethe Centre and sold out at 5Mks a seat. The audience took their seats, the house lights went down, and that was that. After an hour some people began to get restless. And after two hours most of the audience had gone home. It is a creative extension of Beckett's masterpiece. And it proves that we Germans, except for Mr Korschgez, have a sense of humour."

RESIGNING from the Canterbury Women's Suffrage Committee, Councillors Linda Constable and Vicki Buck issued a statement saying: "It is outrageous that we should be asked to sit on the same committee as Des King, and that Des King, who has had three non-molestation orders against him by three of his ex-wives, should have a say in what grants are awarded to Women's Refuges and the Battered Women's Trust. If Des King made a racist statement I doubt if he would be allowed to sit on a Committee that dealt with local Maoris."

"*WE WERE on our way from Novgorod to Warsaw for some serious shopping," said Mrs Orana Gomel, "when Mr Spazz died in his seat. Rather than stop the coach, which was only minutes from the Polish frontier, the driver, Viktor Trist, decided to cross over and bury Mr Spazz on the other side. We propped him up and told the Customs people that he was asleep. Then we drove on and stopped at Suwatki, but the people would not let us bury Mr Spazz there. However, they did sell us some ice. We put him on ice in the back seat. And there he stayed, with us renewing the ice, until we did our shopping, got back to Russia, and buried him."*

BERT KITCHEN

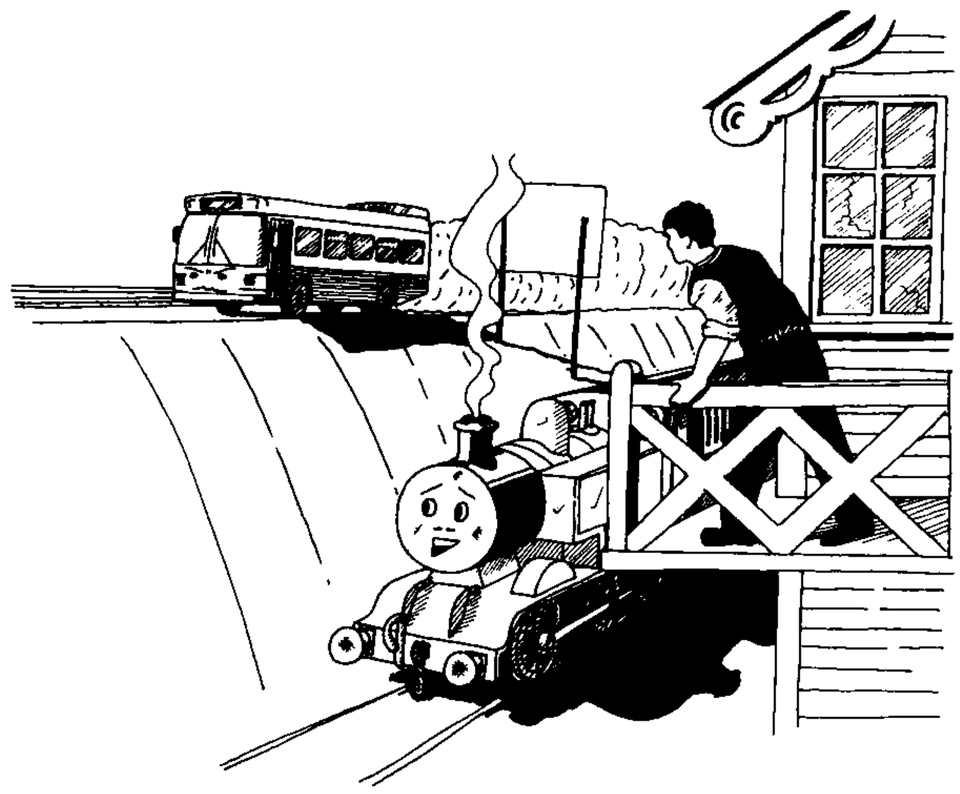
MR Annaline Upper, a Manhattan Father Christmas, has been fined for snarling "You cheap son of a bitch" at passers-by who ignored his collection box.

INFORMATION: New Vision (Uganda) 5.12.92; Baduche Zeitung 8.12.92; Sunday Times Of New Zealand 20.12.92; Itar-Tass Report 3.1.93; Toronto Globe & Mail 24.12.92. MONITORS: William Pike, Tim Allard, John Prebble, Richard Bridge, Brendan J. O'Byrne.

THOMAS

THE PRIVATISED TANK ENGINE

Thomas Goes Racing



"HEY, Granddad! I'll race you to the end of your branch line," shouted Bertie the Deregulated Bus over the station fence one afternoon.

Thomas thought "Granddad" was a bit rich coming from Bertie. Rumour had it that Bertie was owned by Controllers of all shapes and sizes before the Greasy Controller bought him.

"I'm game," replied Thomas. "But when are you due to depart?"

"Due?!" laughed Bertie. "Due?! We don't bother with timetables no more. This is 1993 you know."

At 17.45 the guard blew his whistle. Thomas and Bertie were off.

Crossing over the High Street, Thomas saw Bertie fuming in a huge traffic jam. "You should get yourself some bus lanes!" he whistled.

But later Thomas come to a red signal.

"Sorry!" called the signalman from his museum-piece cabin. "Anyone got any sellotape? My Edwardian levers are falling apart."

And as he hunted for his screwdriver Bertie roared past on the new £40m Inner Relief Distributor Link road. "You wanna get yourself some rubber tyres!" he yelled.

Thomas had to be steadied once he was under way again. "You can't do thirty along here, Thomas," said his driver, applying the brakes. "Have you forgotten that landslip in 1954?"

But Bertie was nowhere to be seen when they reached the terminus at 18.10.

"I COULDN'T finish the race," said Bertie the next day.

"Ha, ha. Fell into a pothole, did you?" laughed Thomas.

"Naw. It was six o'clock."

"So?"

"We have to be back in the garage by six o'clock."

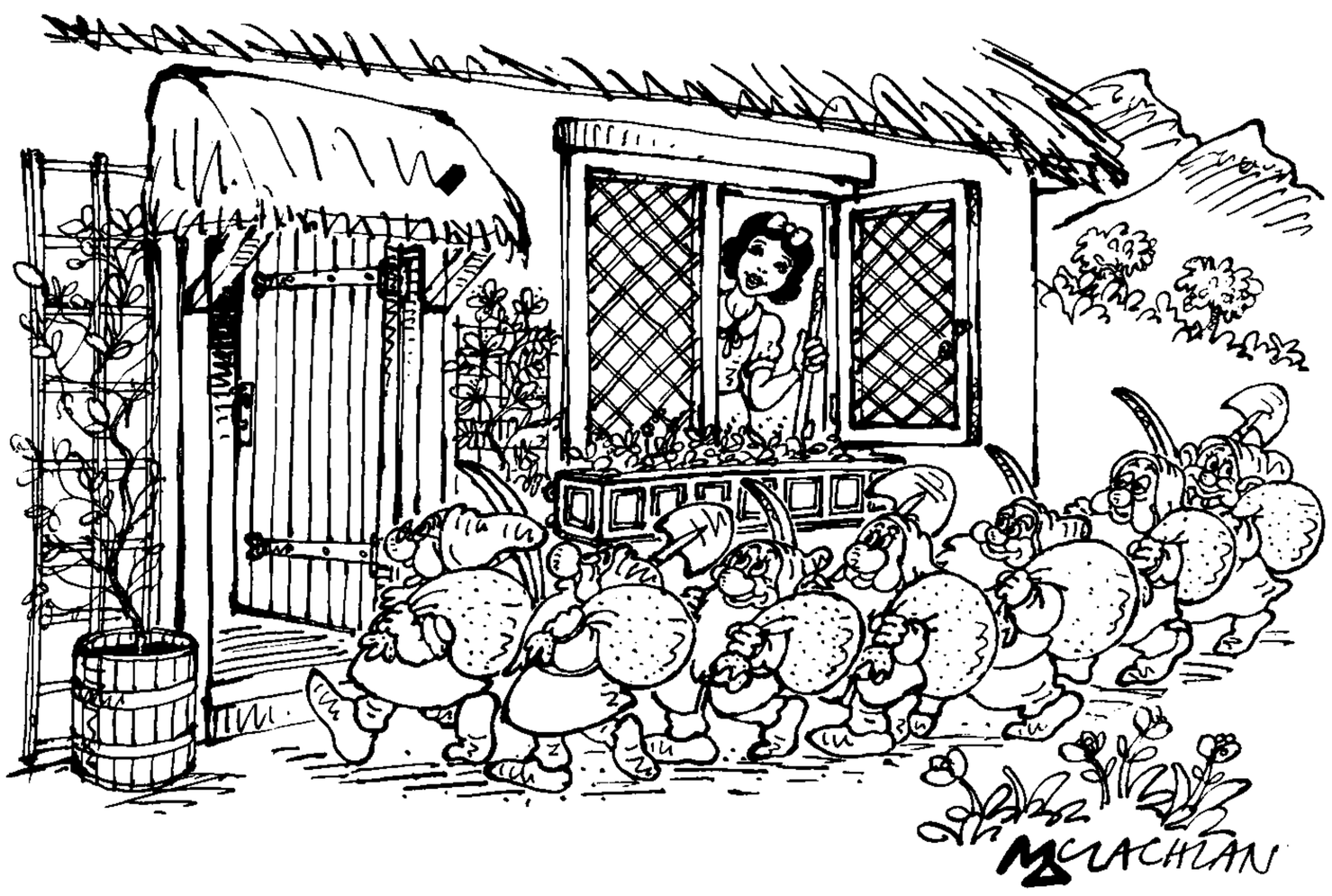
Thomas was speechless. "B... b... but you can't stop running that early!"

"Oh yes we can, and we do," chuckled Bertie.

"But what about the passengers who want a night out, or are working late, or have travelled from afar?"

"Stuff 'em," said Bertie. "It's money that counts, and there's not much of it about after six. You'll soon realise that when the Greasy Controller takes on your franchise! Ha, ha!"

He laughed heartily as he roared away.



"Hi, ho, honey — we're home!"

WHAT EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO REVOLUTIONISE BRITISH RAIL

Mr MacGregor answers your questions

Q. Is British Rail going to be privatised?

A. Yes and no. Yes if you approve and no if you don't.

Q. Can you explain?

A. It's quite simple really. Our proposal is to separate British Rail into a number of component sectors. For example, most of the track will remain the responsibility of British Rail.

Q. So British Rail will still exist?

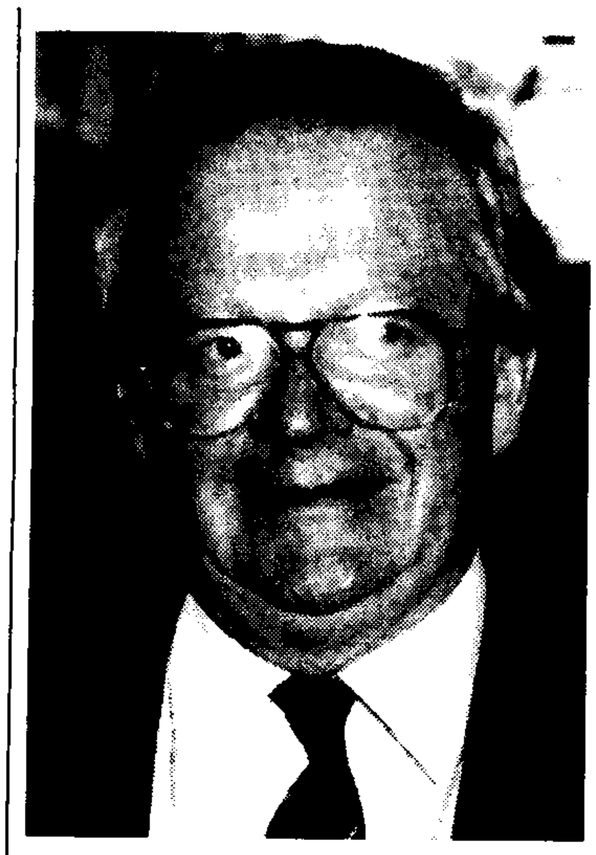
A. Well, not in its present form. The old BR will become an independent franchised agency, regulated by Offrail, which is what most of the trains will be.

Q. What about the signalling system?

A. The signals will be operated by a new commercial agency called Signalforce, who will lease the signals from Trackforce, the new track operation.

Q. What about British Rail sandwiches?

A. I wouldn't touch them with a bargepole if I was you, since



they were redesigned by that Clement Freud. His Kumquat 'n' Bacon Experience is definitely one to be missed.

Q. No, what I meant was — will they be called 'Sandwichforce'?

A. Stations will be known as Tieracks, and trains, run by the new franchises such as British Airways, Good Morning TV and Spud-U-Like, will operate whenever they can get enough passengers to make a lot of money.

Q. Will fares come down?

A. Yes.

Q. You must be joking.

A. I am, ha, ha, ha.

Q. Under your new scheme, how would you get from, say Brighton to London?

A. Very simple. First you would go down to Brighton Tierack, and catch a new Virgin Downsline to Hastings. There you would connect with the World of Weald system, which would take you across to Maidstone. Then you would jump on one of the new Whitecliffs Express shuttles which would get you to Dover in plenty of time for tea. Then, if you still wanted to get to London, you could nip over on the Hovercraft to France, where it would only take you an hour on their very good, cheap state system to reach Paris. Then it's a piece of cake to hop on a plane to Heathrow, and there you are. What could be easier?

Q. Why don't you resign, Mr MacGregor?

A. You will be hearing from my solicitors.

LEGENDARY CREATURE SIGHTED

by Our Television Staff
Alan Yeti

MILLIONS of viewers were last night astonished to catch a clear sighting lasting several minutes of a mythical creature, the so-called Abominable Goodman.

Thousands rang the BBC claiming to have seen this prehistoric monster, half-man, half-lawyer, being cornered on *Newsnight* by an intrepid Sherpa.

The plucky Nepalese, Anthony Howard, showed no fear as he goaded the huge lumbering beast with questions about Harold Wilson and the late Mr Richard Crossman.

For many years scientists have believed that the Goodmanzee was extinct.

Once the terror of anyone venturing into print on any subject whatsoever, the Goodmanzee has not been seen in public since 1979, and his gigantic footprints have not been observed on any of the major libels of recent years.

But suddenly, last night, there he was on the television screens of the nation, bellowing his familiar cry: "How dare you suggest that I use the threat of legal action to shut people up. I tell you, Mr Howard, I will see you in court."

And then, with a final anguished roar, the ungainly creature disappeared into the newsnight, leaving behind only a pile of melted Peter Snow on the studio floor.

Lord Goodmanzee is 187.

WHAT EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO REVOLUTIONISE BRITISH MAIL

Mr Heseltine explains

Q. How will it work?

A. It won't.

Q. So why are you doing it?

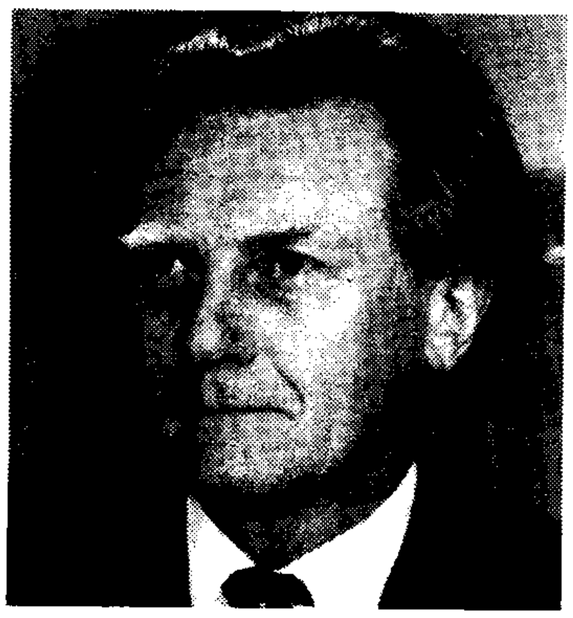
A. What happens is that I close the pits down, and then open them up again.

Q. And then what?

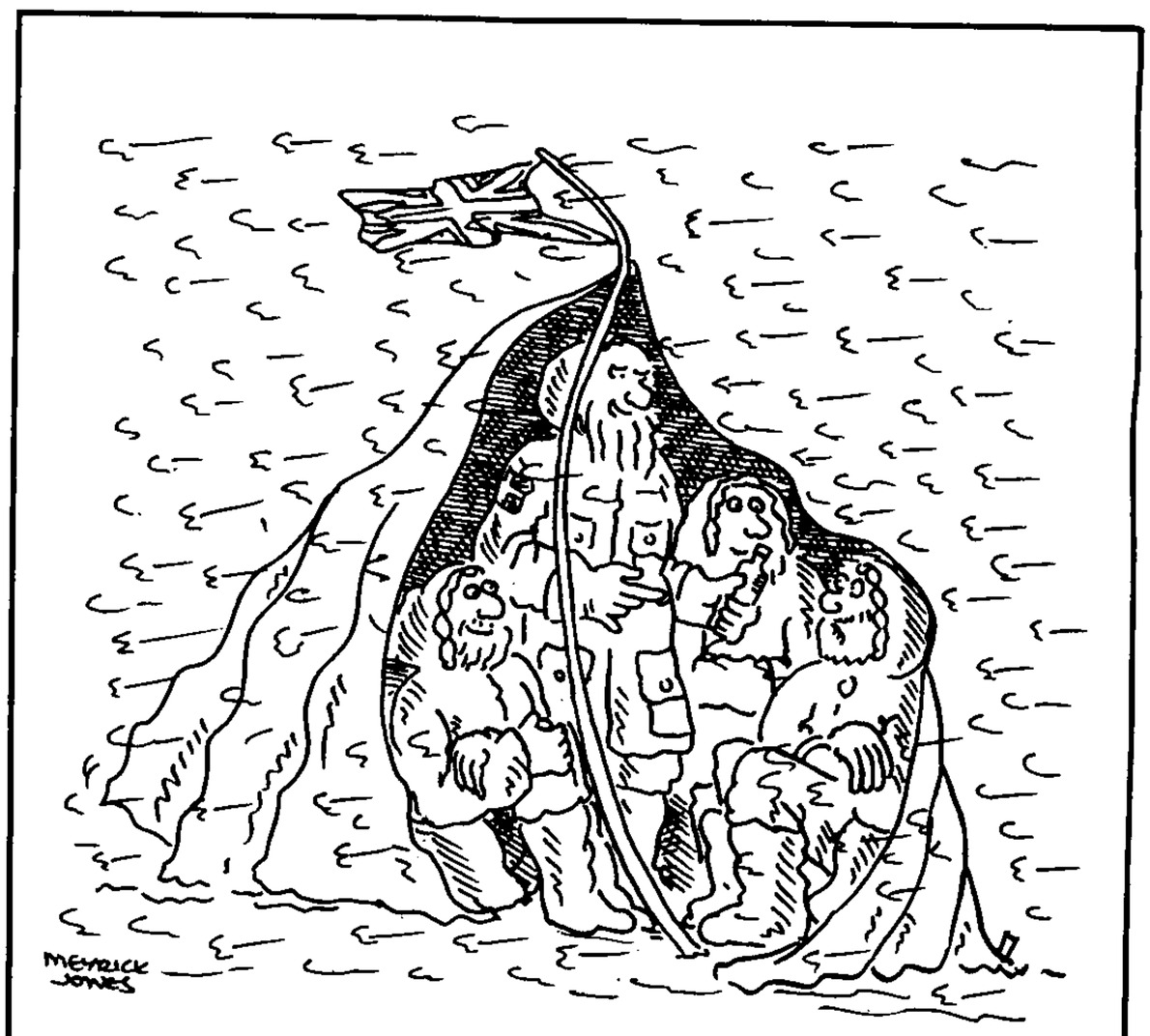
A. I come up with an even worse idea.

Q. Could we get back to your plans to ruin the postal services?

A. Stampforce... franchise... hive-off... Jiffybagforce... queueforce... Closed on Wednesdaysforce... commercialise... rationalise...



vast profits... no one writes letters any more, they just send faxes... er... that's it.



"Look, Oates, a salon shampoo and conditioner in one. So now you can just wash and go"

This week's Clinton appointments in full

President William Jefferson Airplane III has been pleased to announce the following government appointments:

Coordinator-in-Chief Community Health Supervisorial Programme: Ms Lesbina Q. Dykeburger II.

Commander-in-Chief Armed Forces *(to succeed Gen. Colin Powell):* Lieut. Moustache and his longtime partner Otis *(jobshare).*

Attorney-General *(this job is now vacant owing to the withdrawal of Ms Hiram Wetbacks on the grounds of dishonesty and intention to defraud the immigration service).*

Director of Economic Warfare Against Europe: Robbie J. Tariffwall Jnr *(Arkansas State and Univ. College, Oxford).*

Supreme White House Policy Coordinator and Head of Everything: Mrs Hillary Jefferson Airplane.

Lines on the Retirement of Lord King of Wartnaby and the Death of His Brother-In-Law John Poulson, Corrupt Architect

So. Farewell
Then, Lord
King

Chairman of
British Airways.

"We'll take
Good care
Of You."

That was your
Catchphrase

(Or it might
Have been
British Rail's)

Mr Poulson
Also took good
Care of
People.

By bribing them.

So, in one
Way or another,
You had a
Lot in
Common.

E.J. Thribb of Neasden (17½)

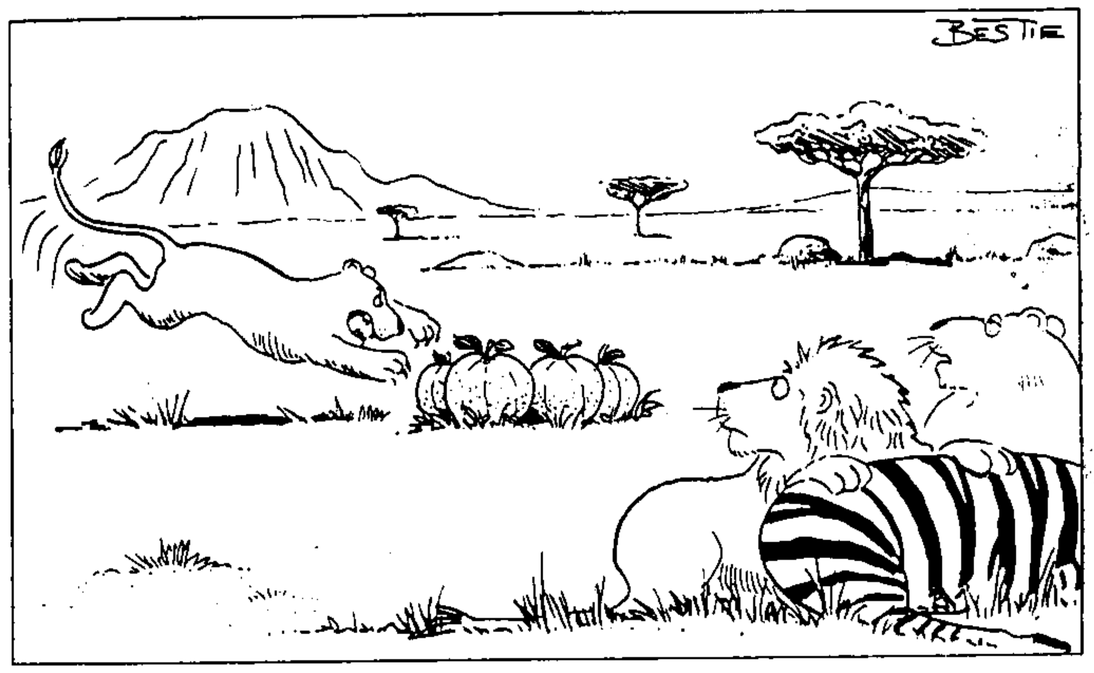
NEW FROM CLINTON plc VIDEOS!

CLASSIC AMERICAN WAR MOVIES

1. The Naughty Dozen
2. Full Leather Jacket
3. The Green Berets (with matching pullovers)
4. Baths of Glory
5. The Longest Date
6. I'm Julian and this is my friend Sandy of Iwo Jima

(That's quite enough. Ed.)

"Dear Sir, I'd like to complain about the lack of garbage in your television programme last night"



"She's trying to make being a vegetarian exciting"

TOP TEN BORES

This Week		Last Week	Weeks On List
1	John Selwyn Gummer	7	105
2	Inspector Morse *(repeat)*	4	1014
3	Jeremy Irons	10	27
4	Pandora Maxwell	3	74
5	Arnold Wesker	–	–
6	Lindi St Clair	–	–
7	Linda Evangelista	9	406
8	Steven Berkoff	–	–
9	Anna Wintour	–	–
10	Jocelyn Stevens	7	14

This week's Bores compiled by the editorial staff of Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd.

OBITUARY

Bernard Braden

by Esther Rantzen

BERNARD Braden's greatest claim to fame was that he was the man who discovered me.

Shortly after I first appeared on his show *The Braden Beat*, he unfortunately had to be sacked. I was therefore able to take over and they changed the name to *That's Life*, which of course has become the most successful consumer programme ever. I shall never forget how good I am

(contd p. 94)

John Major *Clare* Latimer

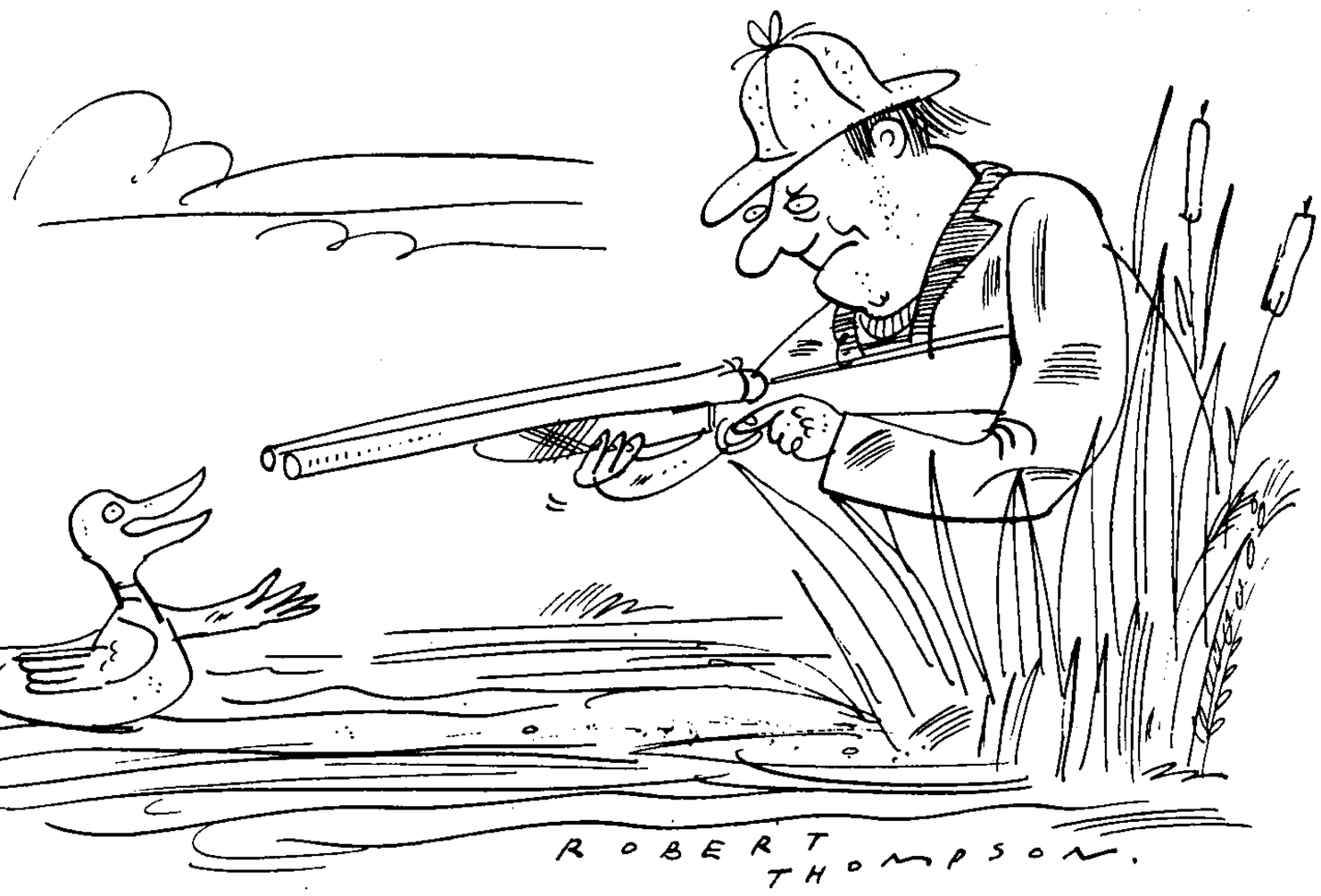
Damages 18

A disturbing tale of legal obsession in which a Cabinet Minister loses his head over a piece in a magazine, All judgement gone, he risks everything to pursue it to the bitter end.

"Stunning film noir — or, rather, film gris"
BARRY NORMAN

Now showing at the following Gnomeons

Carmen West End
Swepstone Empire
Boodles on the Green
Hooper Ritzy



"OK, son, come on, don't do anything stupid. Just give me the gun nice 'n' eeeasy..."

STORM RAGES AS SERIAL KILLER ALLOWED TO BROADCAST

by Our Media Staff
Carl Tonsofgarbage

A ROW erupted last night following the decision to go ahead with the screening of an interview with one of the country's most infamous psychopaths.

At first no one believed that the television companies would actually go through with it. Many thought that such a tasteless and insensitive exercise was beyond even the most cynical of the recent franchise winners.

But they were wrong. The broadcasters defended their actions, saying that the interview brought a new insight into the mind of this uniquely disturbed person.

The producer claimed: "Our footage shows that this is just an ordinary man with a grey suit and glasses. The sort you might see at a cricket match. And yet he is responsible for killing off millions of jobs in cold blood."

Major Criminal

He went on: "He is totally unfeeling. He wipes out industries, dismembers public services and buries economies without even thinking about it. The public have got a right to see this bloke."

But some of the victims felt aggrieved that he should be given all this publicity. Said one statistic: "It's sick. The man shows no remorse at all. He's not ashamed of what he's done. How dare John Major come on the television and justify himself. He should be locked up."

TV SERIAL KILLER INTERVIEW IN FULL

BARRY NORMAN: Good evening. Shocking? Unpleasant? Enough to frighten you to death? Perhaps. But there's no denying the perennial appeal of the serial killer.

(Clip of film)

COUNT DRACULA *(for it is he):* I'm just an ordinary bloke like anyone else. I'm fine most of the time, and then something goes (usually the sun). Then out I come and I have to kill a load of people and suck their blood. Good night.

BARRY NORMAN: Well, there you have it. Or not.

MAJOR DENIES 'RELATIONSHIP' SHOCK

by Our Alleged Home Affairs Staff
Professor Anthony Clare Latimer

AN ANGRY John Major last night hit out at what he called "scurrilous rumours" linking his name with a Downing Street "cook".

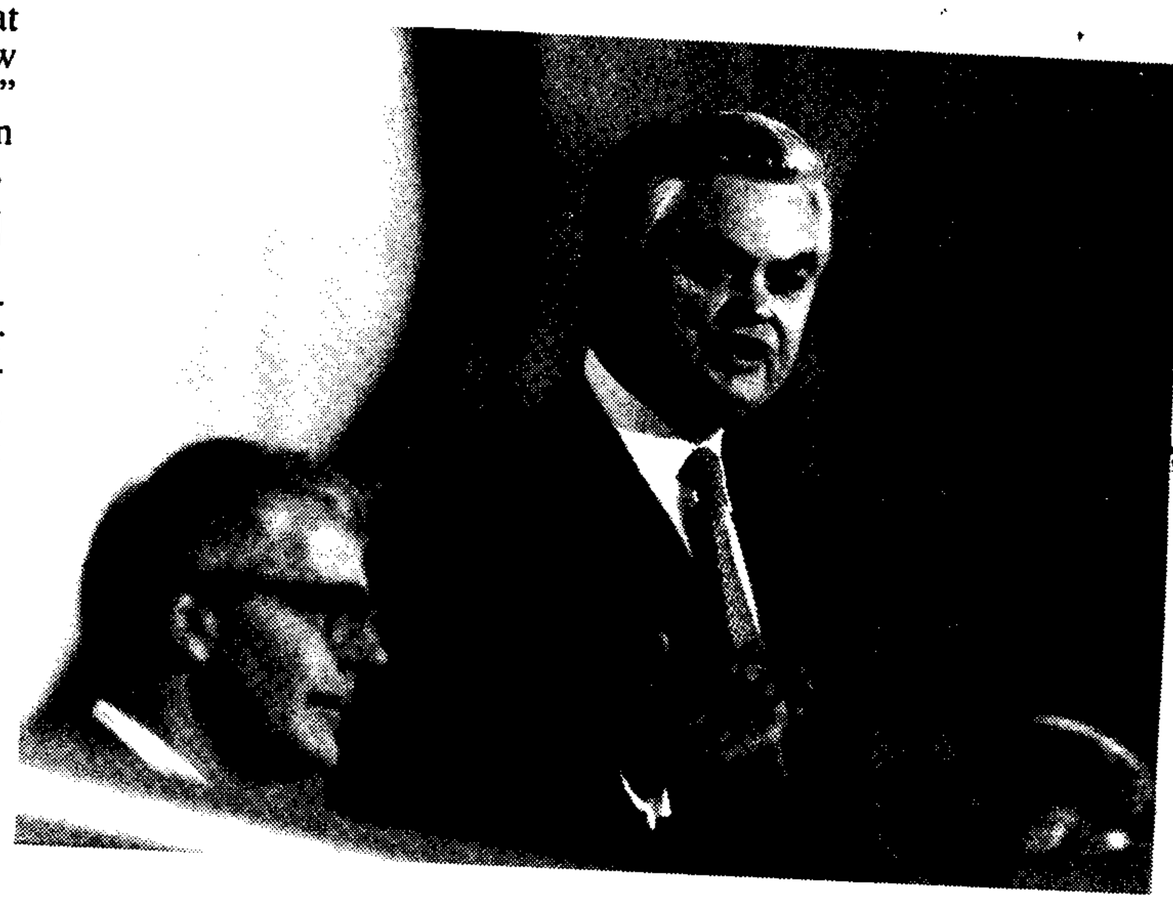
The Prime Minister is to issue writs against the little-read underground paper the *Financial Times*, which this week published a story hinting at a close personal relationship between the Prime Minister and a Mr Norman Lamont.

The allegations, repeated in all other newspapers, suggested that Mr Latimont and Mr Major knew each other "on intimate terms" and had been "seen together" in public on a number of occasions.

Praed Comes Before A Fall

Miss Latimont is a well-known figure in Westminster circles and is highly respected for his ability to cook the books. She is also a familiar figure in West End shopping areas, buying wine she selects herself from importers such as Mr John Onanugu.

Friends described the Prime Minister as "hopping mad" at the smear. His statement claimed: "We have met on a number of occasions in the past, but I hardly know Miss Latimont at all, and after the March reshuffle I hope never to see him again."



NOW IT'S KELVINGATE!!!

✸A tape has come into the hands of Private Eye. It is alleged to be the recording of a telephone call between Mr Kelvin McFilth, 43, heir to the throne of Murdoch, and Miss Camilla Bonkworth, 19, a member of the Wapping aristocracy.

Because Mr McFilth is a well-known public figure who sets himself up as an arbiter of national morality, we believe that it is our duty to publish these tapes and give our readers a bloody good larf!

McFILTH: 'Ullo, darlin'! It's guess-'oo? It's Big Boy.

MISS BONKWORTH: I'm terribly sorry — who is this?

McFILTH: It's me, Kelvin — the Sausage Man!

MISS BONKWORTH: I'm in a meeting, Kelvin. Can you ring me back?

McFILTH: What colour are they?

MISS BONK: I'm sorry, Mr McKenzie, I'm not with you there.

McFILTH: Cor, I wish you *was* wiv me, darlin'. I've got sumfink here under the desk which you might well find interesting!

MISS BONK: I don't know what you're talking about.

McFILTH: 'Ere, Cammy — what's hot and thick and comes out every day, eh? Yeah, you guessed it — the *Sun*!

MISS BONK: Oh, honestly, Mr McKenzie.

McFILTH: No, Cam darlin', you've won an 'oliday for two, wiv me, in the sun!

MISS BONK: I'm quite happy at *The Times*, thank you.

McFILTH: No, dodo — Bar-bay-dos. Where the darkies come from. Just imagine it — you, me, a rum punch under the palm trees, the temperature soaring — 80, 90, Phew What A Scorcher. And just imagine it — gorgeous Camilla, 36-23-36, loves to peel off on a sun-drenched Barbados beach. She's a Wapping girl — in every sense. Go on, fellas, feast yer eyes on her!

MISS BONK: What will your wife say?

McFILTH: Nuffink, 'cos she ain't coming, ha ha ha!

If you wish to listen to the whole Kelvingate tape, dial the following number: 0898 696969.

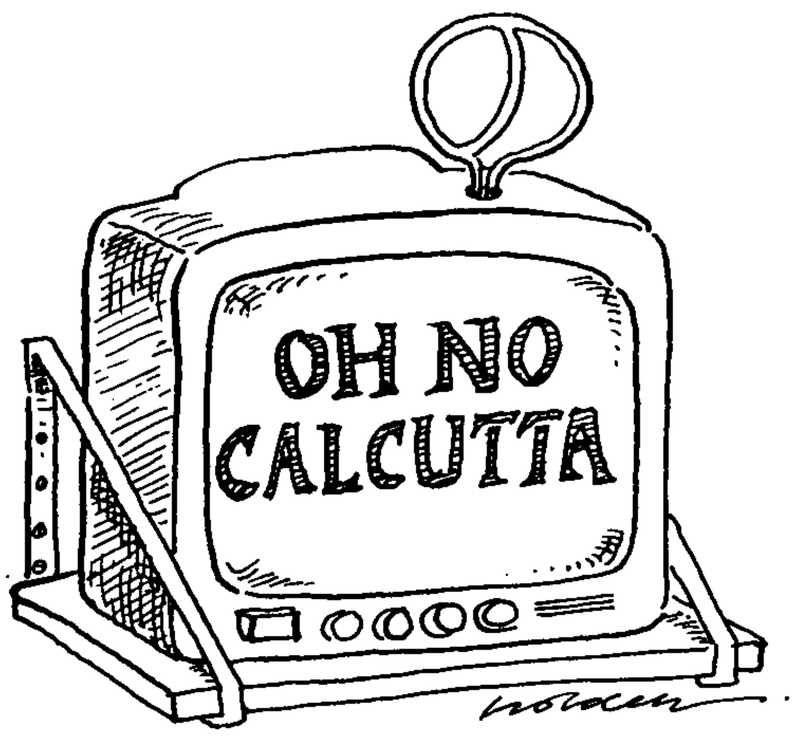
UZ
BY CUTTER PERKINS & RGJ
HA HAARGH! THAT MEKS 10,000 O' THE LITTLE BASTAADS!
THAT'S QUITE A BAG!
WWF
I'M A TIT- PRESS ME!
AK-47
AYE, PET—SO ARE YOU!
YA CANNA BEAT BANGIN' AWAY OOTDOORS!
I DIVVENT SEEM TA GET A SINGLE BIRD, ME!
WORCHAZZA DIVVENT GO FOR SINGLE BIRDS, NEITHER!
AH'M NOT PUTTIN' UP WI' THIS SHITE!
SUE THE BASTAADS!
SUN
THE PAPER FOR REPUBLICANS WHO ARE TOO
WE ♥ SQUIDGY FERGIE HEALS SICK!
FATHA IS A BASTAAD!
HOY US YER TOKENS, PET, THERE'S A FREE CAN O'LAGER IN THIS UN!
NO 12
WHAT SHALL WE HIT THE BASTAADS WITH? SLANDER? LIBEL? SEDITION??
BREACH OF COPYRIGHT!
WRIT
SIGH! AYE, MUTHA! GI' 'EM ROCK!

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

I am still in India and it is still very hot, even though it is winter. I have not come here to watch the cricket, as some people have suggested. Oh no. I have much more important things to do, such as selling aeroplanes and tanks to the Indians.

Fortunately I discovered that all the details had been sorted out before I got here, so I was able to spend the day watching the test match on the



television in my hotel room. Regrettably our team lost, due in my judgement to very poor captaincy by Mr Gooch. It is important that the man in charge should be able to inspire his men (and of course Mrs Bottomley!) by showing real leadership and flair. Not enough people realise this.

Tuesday

Tonight there was a very important dinner in my honour. We had some very hot curry which fortunately I knew how to eat, because my wife Norman often uses chopsticks at home when we have the Lamonts round to watch Lovejoy. Norma usually brings several bottles of wine and we have a very convivial time, discussing such matters as unemployment and the balance of payments. Whatever you may read, on these important issues we are completely as one — neither of us have a clue what to do.

But I digress! My meal was very delicious, although I could not get the hang of the very thin toast called poppadum, which kept breaking when I tried to butter it!

However, my enjoyment was entirely ruined when Mr O'Donnell butted in, waving a pile of faxes from London. "Prime Minister," he said, "the New Statesman is accusing you of not having an affair with your cook." "Oh dear," I said, "is it true?" "Of course not," said Mr O'Donnell.

I abandoned my pilau rice pudding and called an emergency press conference to tell the journalists how very considerably in no small measure angry I was indeed about these totally unfounded rumours, whatever they were.

Mr O'Donnell then took over the proceedings and announced that I was going to sue, to stop them repeating the allegation that I had not had an affair with this lady. I could not help thinking that Mrs Thatcher had never had to face accusations of not having an affair with a woman.

Wednesday

Today I got back home and it is very good to be back. I have a number of new objects to put on my desk, as souvenirs of my trip. They are a set of six model elephants, each one smaller than the one in front (except for the one in front, of course). I have named them John, Norma, Mr Hurd, Mrs Bottomley, Michael and Waldegrave — that is the smallest one, which unfortunately has lost its tusks and keeps falling over. Also I have a very smart new solid gold biro for my jar, which has a special personalised message printed on it reading "From Your Friends At The Saudi Armsco".

I am sorry to see that the newspapers are still going on about my not having an affair with this woman. I told Mr O'Donnell that it was distracting attention from all the important things I was doing to the economy. "Exactly," he said, with a funny smile, and left the room.

Thursday

I have decided to take personal charge of the economy, and so has Norma Lamont. This is very good news, as one of us is bound to get it right. I let it be known I was going to reduce interest rates by 2 percent. At a separate briefing, Norma told some journalists that he was going to put up the interest rate by 1 percent. In the end we decided to compromise by devaluing the pound by 10 per cent. This will be very good news for our exporters, who will be able to sell more weapons to help the world's trouble spots. Who says that my Government does not act decisively? Oh yes, and no.

Friday

At our Cabinet meeting today Mr Rifkind had some more good news for us. "Prime Minister," he said. "I have saved the army from the dreadful cuts which were being proposed by the Secretary of State for Defence." We all cheered at this.

"What about the Catering Corps?" giggled Norma Lamont. "Is she still getting the chopper?"

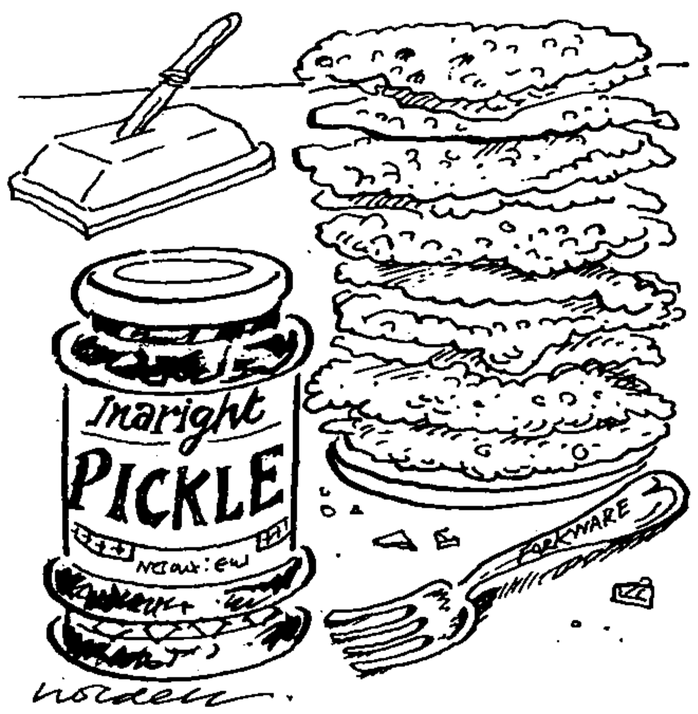
They all laughed at Norma, because he seemed to think that there is only one woman in the Catering Corps. Figures are not his strong point, I'm afraid.

Then Norma picked up his red dispatch box, which made a funny clinking noise, and said he was going "into Purdah" for a few weeks to prepare his budget. Which reminds me, I must prepare mine.

Monday

There was renewed confidence at our Cabinet Meeting today. Mr Hurd passed around reports of Mr Smith's "Keynote" speech at the weekend. Everyone agreed that it was a poor effort on his part.

"Yes, they have stolen all our ideas," I said.



Mr Waldegrave, who was serving the "Decaf" and Hobnobs, put down his tray and said: "How could they steal our ideas when we haven't got any?"

Everybody laughed. But I personally found his remark considerably out of order and made a note in my MCC Diary under "Reshuffle Strategy".

MAN IN THE NEWS

Steve Spart

Until yesterday no one had any idea that the *New Statesman* still existed — let alone that its editor was a boring man with a beard.

But today Steve Spart, 25, is the best-known journalist in Britain. His sensational scoop, MAJOR IS NOT AN ADULTERER, has landed him on the front pages of the world's press.

Splatt's meteoric rise to fame began early yesterday morning when copies of the *New Statesman* (circulation 3) first hit the desks of well-known firms of West End solicitors.

Within minutes Splatt's scoop had been faxed round the world, and the greatest living journalist was submerged under a tidal wave of writs.

After reading the writs carefully, Mr Pratt announced that he would "fight Mr Major all the way", while at the same time apologising unreservedly for anything the *New Statesman* had ever said on this or any other matter.

No Such Thing As A Re-Launch

Of Mr Spart himself little is known except that he has a beard and edits the *New Statesman.*

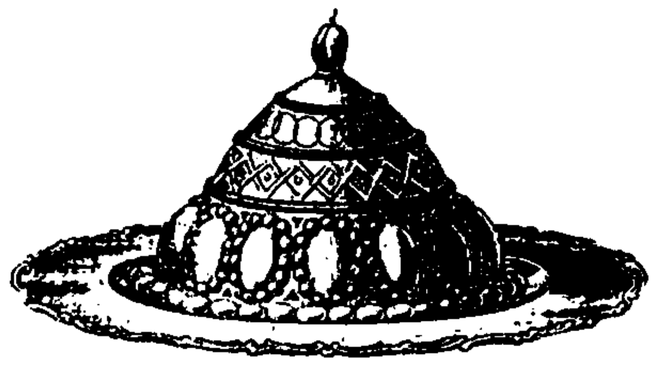
The magazine, which for many decades was the most influential and radical journal in the world, was founded in 1883 by Beatrix Potter and Karl Marx.

It achieved its highest circulation in 1953, when it was regularly selling 100 copies a week, under the legendary editorship of Kingsley Amis.

Since then the magazine's popularity has declined steadily, and today its circulation is 0.

Speaking today at the paper's relaunch party at the House of Commons, Mr Spratt apologised for publishing an interesting piece in the *New Statesman*, and promised it would never happen again while he was editor, which was not likely to be very long.

"The customers like it. It's all part of the 'Feel Good Factor' "



That Clare's Kitchen Buffet Lunch Menu in full

Sue of the Day
Platt de Jour

— ❋ —

Alleged Legover of Lamb
with
New Statesman Potatoes and Half-Baked Rumours

— ❋ —

Prime Minister of Steak (Badly Done)
with
Mixed Grilling

— ❋ —

Egg On Face

— ❋ —

Gooseberry Fool

— ❋ —

Hard Cheese served with Writs Crackers

— ❋ —

Humble Pie

— ❋ —

No Dates
Assortment of Humbugs

— ❋ —

To Drink

House of Commons Whine: White or Red-Faced
Major's Not-Very-Sparkling Water
Freshly Groundless Coffee (HAC)
with
Latiamaria Liqueur

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CHESS

with Andrew Knight

G. Kasparov vs N. Short

1. Short opens by calling Kasparov "extremely arrogant".

2. Kasparov replies with classic Russian Defence: "Shut up, you four-eyed git."

3. Short moves tongue to front of mouth. Takes piss.

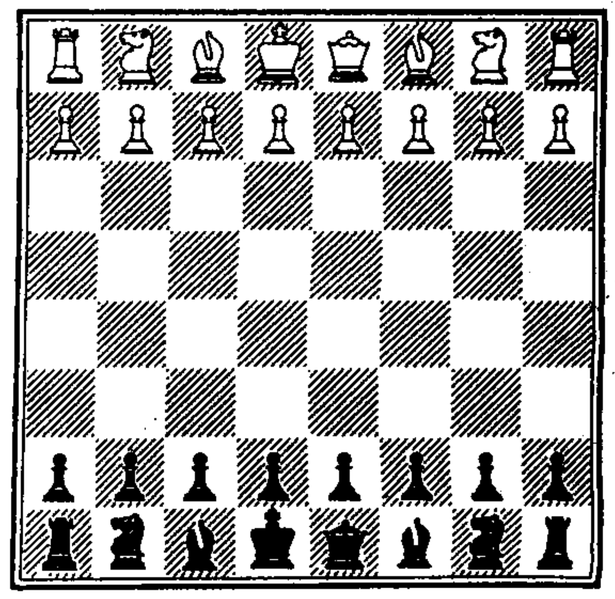
4. Kasparov counters with fist to jaw.

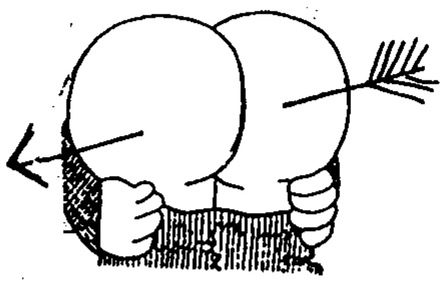
5. Short exchanges left hook for right uppercut.

6. Both lose control.

7. Huge cheque. Not very matey.

8. Match drawn.





Valentine's Day

Radio Four Highlights

7.00 Thought for the Gay
with Rev. Justin Roughtrade of Church of Our Souls

7.58 Looking Ahead on Radio Foreplay

8.00 Woman's Hour
introduced by Jeanette Winterston

8.30 Desert Island Discs
Derek Jarman chooses his eight favourite friends *(shurely 'discs'? Ed)* with Sue Lawley

9.00 Any Questions
from Heaven Club, Charing Cross. Panel includes: Sir Ian McKellen, Matthew Parris, Martina Navratilova, Dave Spart.

9.30 Does He Call You 'Sugar'?
(programme for Disabled Gays)

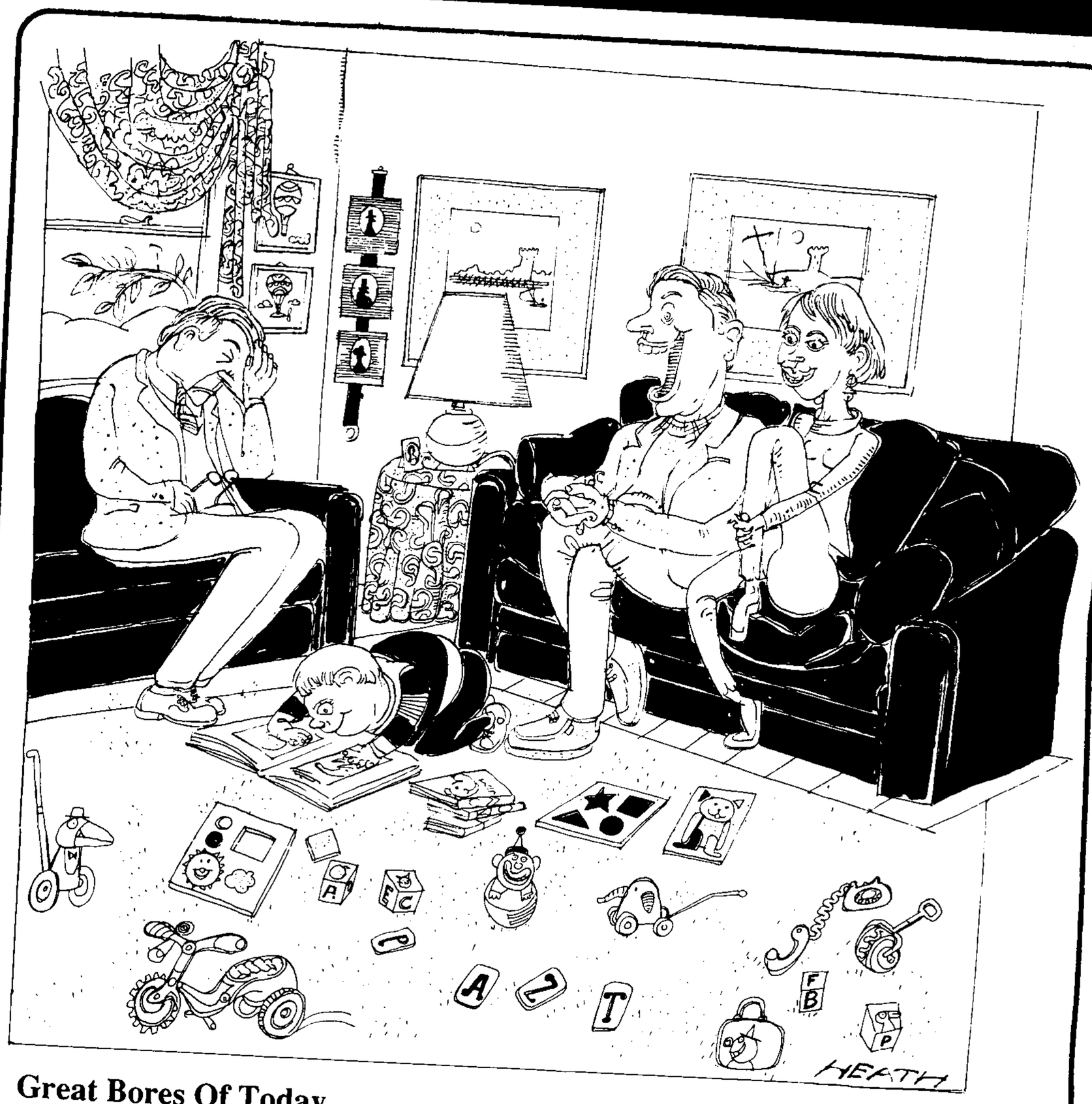
10.00 Book At Bedtime
Winnie The Poof
(Reader: Alan Bennett)

12.00 Closedown
— and everyone goes to Singles Club

A mobile radio system with a highly efficient speech scrambler, invented by three members of the University's Communications Engineering Research Centre has won the Prince of Wales Award for Innovation 1992.

The scrambler device, which will work on private mobile radios, cellular telephones and conventional telephones, recently won Home Office approval.

Nonsuch, University of Bristol

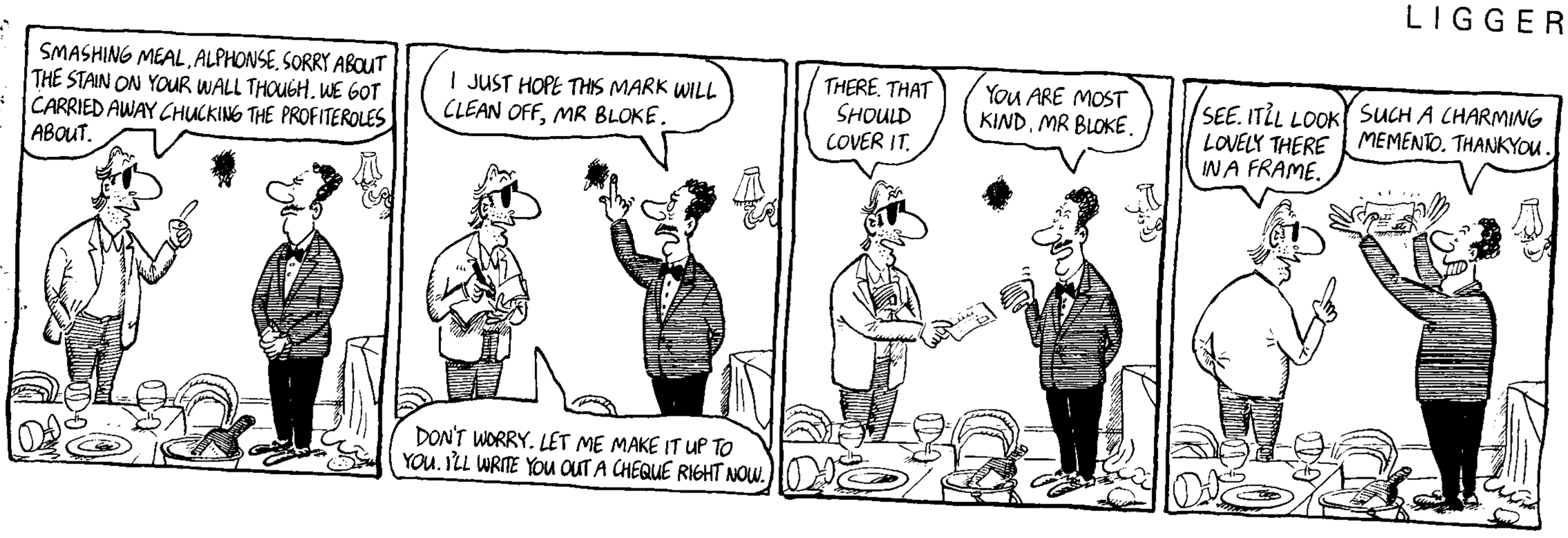


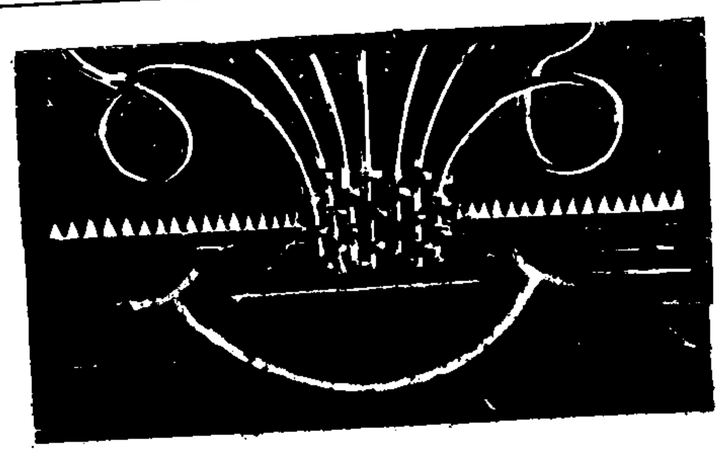
Great Bores Of Today.

"... he's certainly advanced for his age everybody says so the Health Visitor was amazed at the way he was responding to different colours and he can already recognise shapes he can put the circle shape into the circle hole and he did it all on his own he's already speaking he knows lots of words I think he's going to be very musical when you play the radio or Emma puts a CD on he jumps up and down and dances round other children in his playgroup just don't respond to music in the way he does and he's going to be a brilliant sportsman my mother gave him a cricket bat for Christmas and he knew how to hold it instinctively he's got terrific coordination for a child of his age I bet you he'll end up playing for England I don't know where he gets it from ha ha ha..."

Celeb

LIGGER


SMASHING MEAL, ALPHONSE. SORRY ABOUT THE STAIN ON YOUR WALL THOUGH. WE GOT CARRIED AWAY CHUCKING THE PROFITEROLES ABOUT.
I JUST HOPE THIS MARK WILL CLEAN OFF, MR BLOKE.
DON'T WORRY. LET ME MAKE IT UP TO YOU. I'LL WRITE YOU OUT A CHEQUE RIGHT NOW.
THERE. THAT SHOULD COVER IT.
YOU ARE MOST KIND, MR BLOKE.
SEE. IT'LL LOOK LOVELY THERE IN A FRAME.
SUCH A CHARMING MEMENTO. THANKYOU.



JOHN CLEESE and DR ROBIN SKINNER

John: Let me ask you something that has puzzled me a lot over the years. What do we mean when we say that someone is "a bit of a bore"?

Robin: I suppose, John, that on the deepest level we mean that he or she is going on and on about something quite "boring", something of interest only to themselves. And, of course, repeating himself.

John: "Repeating himself"?

Robin: Repeating himself.

John: I see. So someone who "repeats himself" stands in danger of becoming "a bit of a bore".

Robin: Certainly. If he repeats himself, then —

John: — He could become "a bit of a bore"?

Robin: Quite. If he repeats himself.

●

John: One thing I've always wanted to know, Robin, is why quite intelligent people — comedians and so forth — often like to talk in public about themselves all the time: their problems, their innermost thoughts, their feelings about themselves, and so on?

Robin: Good point, John. In layman's terms, this is what we call "talking about yourself in public", often to the exclusion of all others. Broadly speaking, the world can be divided up into two groups of people: people who always talk about themselves, and people who never talk about themselves. Research shows that though quite a few people always talk about themselves, and about the same number never talk about themselves, most of us are in a third group, somewhere in the middle, of people who occasionally talk about themselves, but certainly not all the time.

John: So what you're really saying, if I've understood you correctly, is that the vast majority of people occasionally talk about themselves, but certainly not all the time?

Robin: Correct.

John: Yes, I know what you mean. I used to talk about myself all the time — my "problems", my "innermost thoughts", my "feelings about myself", and so on — but, thanks to psychotherapy, I now find that I talk about myself in public only very occasionally —

Robin: And another thing worth mentioning is —

John: I'm sorry, if I could just finish, Robin — I was just saying that, speaking personally, I now find that psychotherapy has helped me "come to terms" with my past need to "talk about myself", and that I can now be much more objective, showing an interest in other people.

Robin: I —

John: Because, speaking personally for a second, I feel that I have somehow "got out of myself", and can now concentrate on spiritual, psychological and philosophical matters outside my own little world. "Me", if you like, is now less important than "You".

Robin: I —

John: — But, forgive me, I'd like to hear what you have to say for a second! How would you describe me, for instance, to someone who had never met me?

●

John: What do we mean when we say we feel "happy"?

Robin: It's probably best described as feeling the opposite of "sad". Most people are "happy" some of the time and "sad" some of the time, but most of the time they feel something "in between".

John: Neither very happy nor very sad?

Robin: Quite so.

John: And what comes after the letter "D" in the "ABC"?

Robin: For most people, "E".

John: And then "F"?

Robin: Usually.

John: And is "E" a happy letter: Or a sad one?

Robin: Probably somewhere in between.

John: I suppose that in many ways it's infantile and regressive to talk about letters as "happy" or "sad".

Robin: Certainly.

John: After all, they're only letters. They have their off-days like everybody else.

●

John: Why is it only married couples who divorce one another? Is there something about marriage which encourages divorce, do you think?

Robin: In the vast majority of cases, divorce comes about after married couples "fall out" with one another. But of course, if they had remained single, they would not then be in a position to get a divorce.

John: Or if they had never met one another in the first place?

Robin: Certainly.

John: So it follows that the two people — let's call them Person "A" and Person "B" — should never actually meet if they want to avoid the awful prospect of divorce?

Robin: They are certainly increasing their chances for a potential divorce in the years ahead if they first get to meet one another.

John: And what's the best way for "A" to avoid meeting "B"?

Robin: Well, if they live in different parts of the world, and in different socio-economic groups, then that's half the battle won.

John: But surely they might still meet? On holiday, for instance.

Robin: Certainly, that's a risk.

John: So what's the best place to go on holiday in order to avoid meeting your future wife, and the whole thing ending in a distressing divorce, awful for the children and potentially ruinous to the inner psyche?

Robin: We're venturing into very difficult territory here, John. It's advisable to consult a qualified travel agent on this one, I think.

John: Quite.

●

John: Why are so many people these days so very "negative"? For instance, a lot of humour these days seems extremely cynical and "non-positive". Shouldn't we be encouraging our young comedians to be more caring, healthy and "upfront"? It upsets me, for instance, that so few young comedians are writing books telling people how to enjoy better, richer, more fulfilled lifestyles. Instead, they're just telling jokes, often just for a laugh. To put it in a nutshell, what kind of world are we living in, Robin?

Robin: Surveys suggest that we're living in a world full of people of all nationalities inhabiting a variety of types of domicile in a great many different countries, John.

John: You mean there are literally millions of different people in the world, apart from me, of course?

Robin: At a rough approximation, yes, though I'm sticking my neck out a bit here.

John: So the expression, "it takes all sorts," first used by Gurdjieff — or was it Fromm — has a ring of truth to it?

Robin: In a nutshell, yes.

John: And what, in layman's terms, is a "nutshell"?

Robin: Broadly speaking, it's a shell containing a nut.

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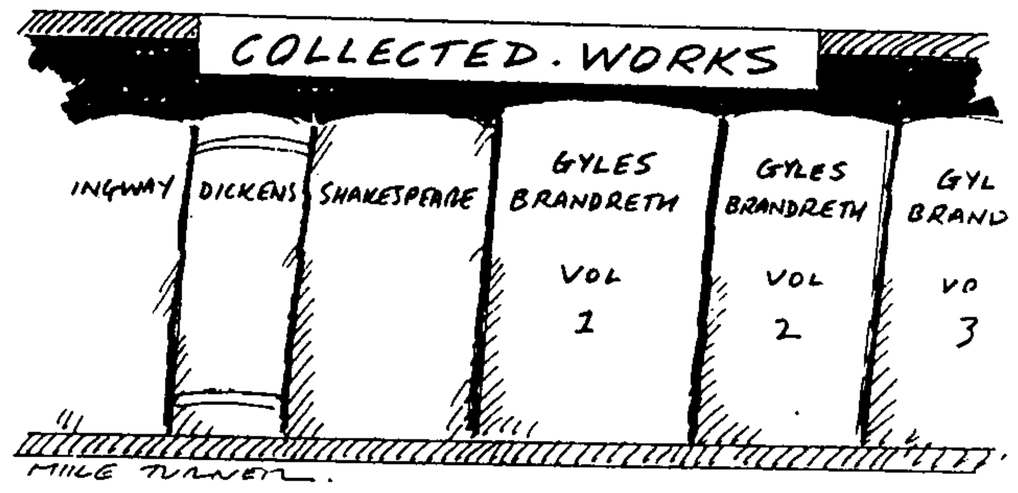


Porn crackers

Pictures At An Exhibition
D.M. Thomas
(Bloomsbury, £15.99)

FOR ONCE, the blurb says it all. *Pictures At An Exhibition*, D.M. Thomas's tenth novel, is apparently "a return to the dark and provocative themes of *The White Hotel*."

Anyone remember *The White Hotel*? Well, it sold several hundred thousand copies and was translated into 20 languages, and if by "provocative" you mean exploiting human misery for artistic and commercial gain, then, yes, this too is a provocative book.

The holocaust, Auschwitz and the gas chambers are, of course, exquisitely trendy subjects, the final frontier of the acceptably unacceptable. Madonna will be coming on in swastikas soon, no doubt; but it is all art, isn't it darlings, and terribly *serious*, so we can all gawp with the clearest conscience in the world.

William Styron in *Sophie's Choice* actually surmounted some of these barriers, and we can charitably extend the benefit of the doubt to Martin Amis. But no one up until now, I think, has ever suggested that Auschwitz, grinning skeletons and simmering Jewish fat had any redemptive qualities.

D.M. Thomas in the guise of his various narrative voices appears to take a different view. *Pictures At An Exhibition* kicks off with the memoirs of Dr Chaim Galewski, a Czech Jew whose attendance at the ovens is interspersed with Freudian attempts to repair the damaged psyche of his superior, Dr Lorenz. Everybody, inevitably enough, is convinced that what they are doing is for the best: the whole death camp panorama, consequently, is conveyed with frightening laconicism, all incidentals and throwaway detail.

Galewski records that the train ride to Auschwitz was accompanied by "the usual overcrowding and starvation, resulting in hundreds of deaths". Later on as a prison trusty "the work was terrible, but we could steal food from the clothes of the victims". Excavating some mangled corpses in search of plunder, he reveals that "the bodies were in a pretty filthy state, smeared with shit and even menstrual blood in one case".

All this comes interleaved with some lively set-pieces, including a Jewish girl forced to fellate her former abuser as he hangs garotted, and a "psycho-sexual experiment" in which the victims are compelled to refrain from orgasm on penalty of death.

While the tone of this opening section — half gloating, half detached — might be difficult to take, what follows is somehow even more depressing. Succeeding chapters home in on a collection of more or less contemporary Londoners — the time is late 1990 — linked by their relation to an elderly Jewish psychologist named Jacobson, their drearily adulterous private lives, and, however marginally, their connection with the lurid Nazi past.

Never mind the frailty of the attachment — all done with dreams, snippets of Freud, amazing coincidences and sado-masochistic jollies; what Thomas seems to be insinuating is that Auschwitz is a common experience, touching us all (there is, predictably, an inane attempt to add Mrs Thatcher to a line of tyrants that takes in Lenin and Hitler). Finally, numbers of people are bloodily knocked off by the psychologist's crazed wife, who believes "that there was more sense of spirituality in Auschwitz than there is in modern London".

What is Thomas trying to do? Either he seriously believes that the death camps were some sort of apocalyptic artistic happening, fenced round with kinky sex and symbolism, in which case God help him; or he thinks that you can somehow cope with these horrors by demythologising them, reducing them to the matter-of-factness of Lorenz and Galewski's fireside chats. But the point about evil is that it isn't assimilable in this way, and to knit a tea cosy of sexy detachment around suffering is simply unforgivable.

Whatever Thomas's motives, the rest is everything the reader of his novels would expect: the cleverness (Thomas's ploy of cannibalising real life for the purposes of art is mimicked by one of his characters), the pop-eyed sex, the appropriation of historical texts (in this case an account of starving Jewish children reduced to eating mortar from the walls of the house in which they are confined), and the slack formulations of "devastating blows", "humiliating events" and "sensitive adolescents".

"I dislike the voyeurism of it," Dr Lorenz observes to Galewski, apropos one of the sex experiments. "So do I," Galewski replies. So would anyone. This is a disgusting and repellent piece of work. The only appropriate response to it would be to compel Thomas to visit one of the death camp museums in Eastern Europe and make him watch tapes of piled corpses — real people, you know, who *actually died* — until he was physically sick.

Forget about Red Hot Dutch and the titillations of the top shelf. This is *real* pornography.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *THE eminent publisher Sir Christopher Sincere-Stevenson was asked last week what he thinks of his latest book,* No Exit *by Julie Burchill.*

"Goodness me!" he expostulated. "I wouldn't dream of reading such stuff!"

Sir Sincere added that he had not enjoyed his recent lunch with the great author. "She was very rude. She ordered a Bloody Mary and then didn't drink it. And, what's more, she ate lunch with her fingers!"

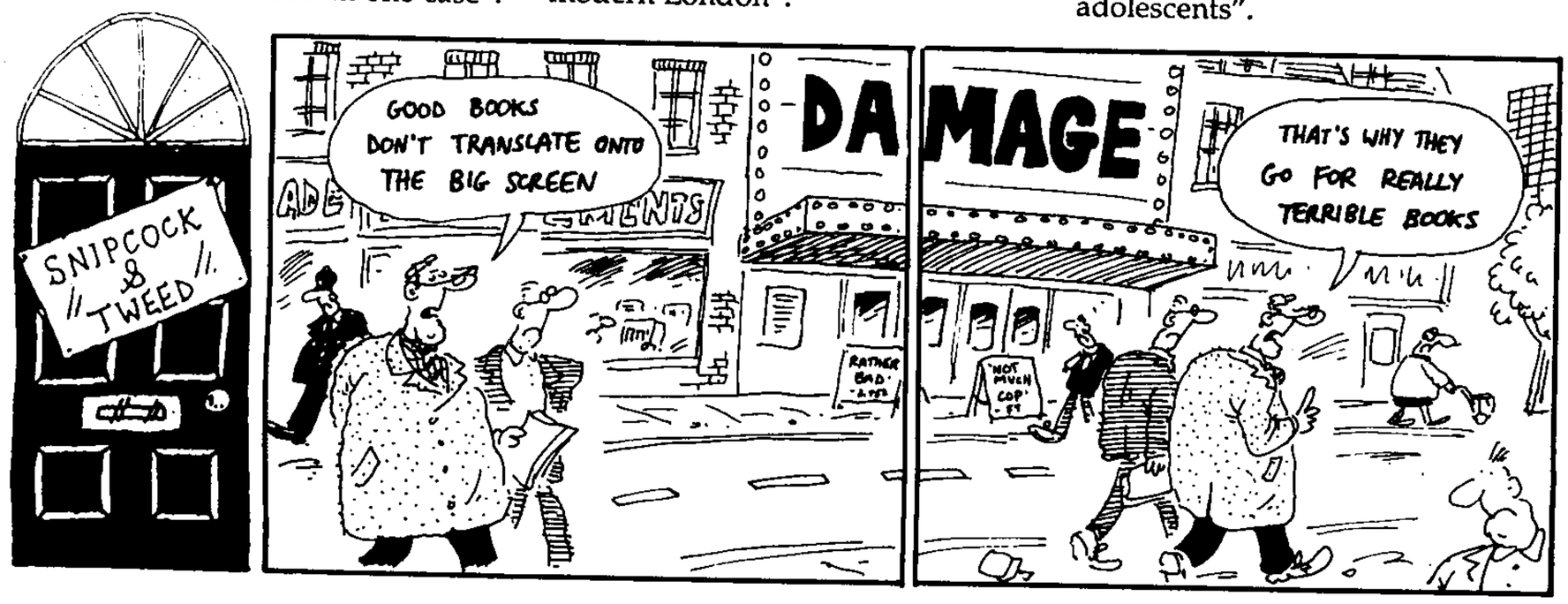
☐ IT SEEMS impossible to keep Sir Roger "Rabbit" Elliott, chief executive of Oxford University Press, due to retire in August, out of this column.

When the mandarins of the Publishers' Association elected him vice-president a couple of years ago it was with some relief in that (a) they were offering obeisance to our leading university press; and (b) as Sir Rabbit was retiring from the Press in 1993 there was no way he could succeed popular Paul Scherer of Bantam as president.

This was to underestimate the guile and ambition of Sir Rabbit, still in search of that elusive peerage. It has just been announced that he has kindly agreed to come out of retirement next year to succeed Scherer as president of the PA — to start with for one year, rather than the traditional two, but no doubt Bunny will make himself available for a further 12 months.

The current *Bookseller* discloses, in a report from the front, that OUP is having difficulty finding a successor to Sir Rabbit as head of the Press, and that he may be succeeded not as previously by a professional publisher but by another academic. Has it not occurred to them that it would be the simplest thing in the world, or at least the university, to change the stipulation that the chief executive of the Press is obliged to retire aged 65 and extend Rabbit's contract? Perhaps he could combine the job with his chair of physics to which he's expected to return at the beginning of the 1994 academic year? He is, after all, a Renaissance man.

'Bookworm'



KENNETH CLARKE AND THE BRIDGEWATER THREE

Chucking out time at the Bar?

KENNETH CLARKE, QC: Home secretary with a keen nose for justice

NOTHING in recent years has delighted the judiciary and high freemasonry of the police more than the appointment after the election of Kenneth Clarke as home secretary.

In straight political terms (very slightly wet) there was little to choose between Clarke and his predecessor, Kenneth Baker. But the joy for the judiciary and the police was that Clarke was a member of the most powerful and self-protective closed shop in Britain: the Bar.

Since no one can be a judge who is not a barrister, it follows that the Bar cabal protects judges as well. The public is led to believe that important cases are allotted to judges and decided by them purely at random. This is a fiction. The whole circus of the law is presided over most meticulously by its ringmasters at... the Bar.

For many years members of the Bar cabal have been deeply upset by the allegation that their legal system can sometimes go wrong. In particular they have resented the habit of home secretaries, with increasing lack of care for the "majesty" of the law, to refer back to the court of appeal cases which have already been decided by the judges there. When the Tory government took office in 1979 and seemed like staying there for some time, the Bar cabal decided they would deal with the mischief caused by "referring back" by being even tougher in the "referred" cases than in others.

This was the background to the case of the Birmingham Six, referred back to the court of appeal in 1986. Lord Lane, lord chief justice, took this case himself. By the time-honoured device of ignoring or disbelieving all the evidence for the six men, and believing anything which could conceivably discredit their evidence, Lane and his two colleagues, Messrs O'Connor and Stephen Brown, threw out the case.

Lane went out of his way to say that he and his colleagues found that the convictions referred to them by the then home secretary, Douglas Hurd, had been even more obviously correct than usual. The lesson for Hurd was clear: busybody politicians should stop interfering in our system, which we can run perfectly well without them.

To the Bar cabal's fury, however, Hurd didn't seem to get the message. In quick succession he referred back two other wrongly-decided murder cases: the case of the three men convicted in 1978 of murdering the newspaper boy, Carl Bridgewater; and the case of the four young people convicted of bombing pubs in Guildford and Woolwich in 1974.

The Bar cabal quickly prepared its counter-attack. The Bridgewater case was heard over nine weeks in 1988 and 1989. The presiding judge was Lord Russell, a close friend of Lord Lane. With him were two safe pairs of hands, those of Mr Justice Leonard, a former Common Sergeant at the Old Bailey, and Mr Justice Potts.

Once again the enormous weight of new evidence for the three men was ignored. There was no new evidence to support the by now almost non-existent prosecution case, but that did not worry the judges. They cobbled together a joint judgment which dismissed the appeal.

In the case of Michael Hickey, the judges added a new principle to English law: that a man can be guilty if his cousin is. There was no evidence against Michael of any weight whatever, so the judges convicted him on the ground that he and his cousin Vincent insisted they were together on the afternoon of the murder. There was some minimal evidence against Vincent and, therefore, Michael must be guilty because Vincent was.

Everything was proceeding according to plan when suddenly the Bar cabal was badly let down by a handful of police officers who were investigating the Guildford case. They suddenly realised not only that the Guildford Four were innocent — that had been perfectly obvious for years to anyone who had studied the case — but that their guilt could no longer be credibly sustained in court. The confessions on which they were convicted were so obviously false, so obviously tortured out of the four young people, that there was no way even the court of appeal could sustain them. The prosecution, therefore, not without a show of intense petulance by the judges — Lord Lane up again — caved in.

The Guildford Four were innocent! The dam of injustice had been broken. In the wake of that shock verdict, home secretaries' referrals back grew apace. Many of them resulted in wrongly convicted people walking free. This process, horrifying to the cabal, seemed to have no end. In 1991, for instance, the Birmingham Six case was referred back again, and this time could not be covered up. Carefully shielding their colleagues who heard the first case, the court of appeal judges grudgingly let the six men go.

Then came quickly, among others, the Kiszko case, the Maguires, Judith Ward, the Darvell Brothers, the Cardiff Three. When Lord Lane made his portentous remarks during the Birmingham case in 1987, it still seemed highly unlikely that any convicted defendants in any major case would ever break the power of the Bar cabal. By the end of 1992, it must have seemed doubtful to most observers whether any guilty verdict in any major case was safe.

The Bar cabal, with its friends in the high freemasonry of the police, called a halt. Their Alamo was the Carl Bridgewater case, which was again knocking at the door of the home office for a reopening. It was perfectly obvious, as it had been in the Birmingham and Guildford cases, not only that the convicted men were innocent but also that the crime had been committed by someone else who was identifiable. But the Bar cabal calculated thus: if this case is referred back and the men freed, many people might ask whether the entire judiciary is engaged in a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. The judges of the court of appeal might get away with a rotten judgement once. But Birmingham was enough. Bridgewater would be intolerable.

The Bar cabal made another calculation. The eyes of the world had been focused on Birmingham, Guildford and the Maguires. Irish ministers — and often American secretaries of state — raised these cases with alarming frequency. Archbishops, even former judges, were complaining about them. But the Hickey cousins and Jimmy Robinson were small-time thieves in the Birmingham underclass. The Carl Bridgewater murder had no political significance. Which big battalions, ambassadors, archbishops, former judges could these hoodlums call to their support? And what did it matter if three criminals, two of whom had been driven half-mad anyway, rotted in jail for something they didn't do? How could that "injustice" compare with the likely damage its exposure would do to the "majesty of the law"?

The problem was, of course, that the case against the men had evaporated. The new evidence sent to home secretary Kenneth Baker in 1991 finally exposed the confession of Pat Molloy — by far the strongest evidence for the prosecution — as a fake. If the case went back to the court of appeal, there was no telling what more dirt the men's lawyers would uncover to discredit the prosecution case.

Thus, it was decided, the case must not be referred.

Fortunately for the cabal, Baker, who was not a barrister, was no longer home secretary. He had been replaced by a keen member of the cabal, Clarke, who had been a QC since 1970. Clarke could be relied on to hold the line, and did so with the public relations panache for which he is famous. Not bothering to tell the families or their lawyers before the news went out on the radio, he gave a few choice interviews to selected journalists and then ordered his fellow ministers and officials not to debate the case with anyone. Thus a Central Television evening debate on the case had to be called off when the home office ducked out.

Clarke backed up his decision with a letter, dated 2 February, which must have made Lord Lane, Lord Russell and all the rest of the Bar cabal exceedingly proud of their young colleague. The technique was to discredit the new evidence for the men by asserting, without proof, that it was unreliable.

Thus the fact that a prison officer called Gibson had come forward with very strong evidence that a key witness in the case — effectively the only witness against James Robinson — had indicated he had lied to the court of appeal in 1989 — was dismissed with the sentence: "Other prison officers do not support Mr Gibson's version of events". Which other prison officers? Mr Clarke does not say. Nor is it specially relevant, since Mr Gibson's account of his conversation with the witness makes it clear that no other prison officers were present or in earshot.

Another choice example of the Clarke/Bar cabal method is this extract: "The submissions of experts in linguistics and of a psychologist have been fully and carefully considered but nothing in them has been found which would appear to touch the safety of Mr Molloy's conviction."

Molloy was convicted solely on his confession. There was not a scrap of other evidence against him. None of the witnesses picked him out on an identification parade. All four language experts said they did not believe it even remotely likely that Molloy confessed in the circumstances described at the trial by the police. Yet without a shred of proof, Clarke blandly asserts that none of them "appear to touch the safety of the conviction".

The most remarkable part of Clarke's letter concerns the police officer who, Molloy alleged, beat the confession out of him. This was DC John Perkins, who rose from the beat at Wolverhampton to the regional crime squad and later to the now-disgraced West Midlands serious crime squad.

Perkins, who died last year, was a thoroughly corrupt officer who, as the *Eye* has revealed in the past, lived a life of luxury from his ill-gotten gains in the Wolverhampton meat markets, betting shops, clothes shops and used car markets. Wherever there was a backhander to be had in Wolverhampton, Perkins was there to seize it. He liked to go on cruises on the QE2 — he went on at least half a dozen during the 1980s — which was remarkable for a man on the salary of a detective constable.

His speciality was extracting confessions from suspects. He was a strong and violent man who felt that suspects were there to be beaten. A standing joke about him in Wolverhampton is that on one visit to a police station, after consuming a more than usually heavy skinful of beer, he walked straight up to a man being questioned, shouted "hasn't he coughed yet?" and set to slapping and punching until he was dragged off by his embarrassed colleagues, who told him that his victim was not a suspect but a helpful witness.

The Hickey and Robinson petition pointed out that Perkins, when a member of the serious crimes squad, had taken part in fabricating another confession, and had been disciplined and fined for it.

Clarke had plenty of evidence before him of the dreadful record of DC Perkins. He knew about his corruption and his fabricated confession. "In considering DC Perkins's role," said his letter, "I have had regard to the fact that over seven years elapsed between the investigation into the murder of Carl Bridgewater and the misconduct of which DC Perkins was later found guilty. I do not consider that Perkins's conduct at this much later date provides of itself a sufficient reason to doubt the propriety of any actions by Perkins in the Bridgewater investigation." The fact that Perkins fabricated evidence and perjured himself in 1985 is not, for Kenneth Clarke QC, a sufficient reason to suspect that he might have done exactly the same in 1978.

The *Eye* is keen to let Mr Clarke know a little more about the corrupt, drunken, violent and racist officer he so stoutly defends. Any information on the life and times of DC Perkins will be most welcome.

ARMS

Hawks not doves

INDIA, one of the world's poorest countries, never fails to rescue its former colonial master from a tight financial corner.

Dutifully, it is preparing to bail British arms manufacturers out of recession by buying 100 Hawk trainer jets for around £1 billion. Despite John Major's recent grin-and-snap visit to New Delhi, this murky deal is still not quite in the bag.

For a start there is competition from France, which is offering the Alpha jet made by Dassault. The Alpha is said to be cheaper than the Hawk — because the French are merely recycling old Alphas returned to them from Germany.

Persuasive Frenchmen were at work in New Delhi six weeks before Major's visit at the end of January. Pierre Joxe, France's defence minister, reportedly offered "bargain basement" prices for the Alpha during his week-long visit, throwing in an offer of jointly exporting French defence equipment manufactured under licence in India.

This French offer of defence co-operation invariably accompanies their big armaments deals across the world. But once the deal is done, say the arms dealers, these joint venture offers either take aeons to materialise or simply disappear.

Both France and Britain, facing growing unemployment, a shrinking arms bazaar and a rapidly disarming Europe, are desperate to clinch the trainer deal. British Aerospace laid off hundreds of employees when it shut down several units recently, and Dassault, too, faces serious cutbacks.

The day after Major left for home, Boris Yeltsin pitched up, offering India much needed defence spares, joint manufacture of defence equipment and opened negotiations on a trainer jet. But Indian officials are wary of Russia's reliability as a long-term defence supplier because its arms factories are becoming increasingly independent and keener to strike private deals than be tied to dealing with bureaucratic governments.

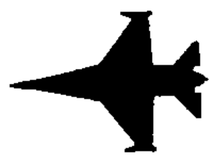
The good news for Major is that the Indian air force (IAF), modelled on the RAF, prefers the Hawk. Besides being generally familiar with British armaments, the IAF feels it is superior to the Alpha.

Major may offer a "sweetener" similar to the one offered by Mrs Thatcher when she "sold" India 21 Westland helicopters for civilian use through a grant-in-aid scheme of around £60 million in the mid-eighties. This bailed everyone out of trouble — Westland, Mrs Thatcher and her cabinet — except Michael Heseltine.

But two of these helicopters crashed, killing 10 people, and the entire fleet was grounded a year ago, prior to being sold. Westland stopped manufacturing this model after the Indian deal.

Soon after, India again dutifully bought the obsolete aircraft carrier, HMS Hermes. And three years later it again rescued Westlands by buying 20 Sea King helicopters for its navy, worth around £400 million, when it faced an order shortage. A final decision on the trainer jet is expected over the next few weeks.

Timor-ous beasties



WHILE continuing to pretend that they are reluctant to arm dictators like Iraq's Saddam Hussein, ministers continue to brag how they have armed dictators everywhere else.

The prime minister's press office worked overtime to boost his deal to sell Tornado jets to the dictator king of Saudi Arabia; and in the House of Commons on 12 January defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind rejoiced at the prospective sale of Warrior and Piranha armoured vehicles to the dictator emir of Kuwait.

Lest anyone think the government cares two hoots about the dictators who defy the United Nations, note this comment from Archie Hamilton, Rifkind's deputy, on the sale of British arms to the dictator of Indonesia (who continues to occupy East Timor against countless UN resolutions): "There is no doubt in my mind that a Hawk aircraft can do nothing to suppress the people of East Timor".

Arms sales are the only growing British export. The British share of the world's arms market went up last year from 17 to 20 percent.

Big weapons haul

THE BRITISH government's offer to provide Boris Yeltsin's cash-strapped administration with specialist trailers to lug redundant nuclear weapons across the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is less generous than it seems.

The weapons will be transferred to a central disassembly site from far-flung corners of the CIS, but in Britain the move is only likely to achieve the transfer of £20 million of taxpayers' money to favoured defence contractors such as Brown & Root and DML.

B&R secured the contract, reported to be for 20 trucks, on the strength of its "previous successful projects" for the ministry of defence in this area. *Eye* readers will recall that the new "truck cargo heavy duty mark II" vehicles that B&R designed for the MoD — at the exorbitant cost of nearly £1.5m a time — broke down on their first outing last year, leaving a convoy of nuclear warheads marooned on the M62.

The vehicles have since proved so reliable that a breakdown truck is now obliged to accompany each convoy. As the lorries cannot be relied on to negotiate the smooth paved surfaces of Britain's motorways without mechanical mishap, how much use will they be on the heavily cratered highways of the former Soviet Union?

RAILWAYS

What Dr Beeching ordered...

LAST WEEK'S announcement of the first seven railways to be franchised confirmed that the latest fiasco has *exactly* the same hidden agenda as the infamous Beeching cuts of the 1960s.

Dr Richard Beeching's target was twofold: to cut the drain of railways on the public purse and to ensure that the road lobby, already fat, grew fatter. Today's privatisation is a slightly different means to the same twin aims.

When Beeching rolled up his sleeves there were numerous minor lines that needed closing — throwbacks to the days when competition *within* the railways was genuinely possible. He used that situation, however, as a cover to close many lines that obviously should have been retained (some of which have been reopened *profitably* in recent years). Towns as large as Mansfield, Gosport and Ebbw Vale lost their train services.

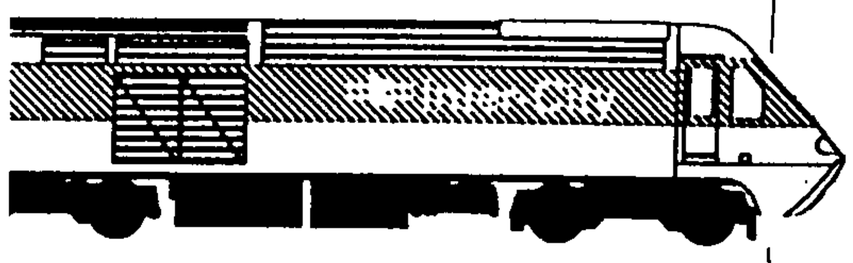
Much larger towns, however, will vanish from the rail map in the bedlam surrounding the current changes. Transport secretary John MacGregor assures us that the "proper procedures" will be used to close the railways. But the legislation in question makes no provision for a private franchise going bankrupt — as many will without continuous government sweeteners. It is almost impossible that a replacement franchise holder would be willing and capable to step in the very next day, so most of the rail passengers will immediately defect to the competition — road.

The closest parallel between mad axemen Beeching and MacGregor is in their attitude towards the network. A rail system can only operate like a river and its tributaries; smaller lines, often unprofitable per se, contribute valuable traffic to larger ones. Mainline trains run from city centre to city centre, but few people actually live in city centres these days. If they have to start a journey by car to the rail station, they are likely to stay in the car for the rest of the journey.

Beeching closed the unprofitable branch lines, and the main lines suffered as a result. By isolating routes such as the London to Edinburgh line in his inaugural franchise round, MacGregor is following the same path. He knows the new operator on that route will not provide decent connections at, say, Darlington for Teesside; decent connections involve through ticketing, coordinated timetables and *delaying* the express services when local trains are late. Without decent connections, Teessiders will start travelling by road. Without the custom of Teessiders (and without the custom of the people of Wearside, West Yorkshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, all of whom will have the same problems) even the showpiece London to Edinburgh line could become unprofitable.

Separating profitable and unprofitable services in the MacGregor fashion also puts an end to cross subsidy. Profits will go to shareholders' pockets instead of to other rail routes, which will therefore appear even less profitable and be more suitable as closure candidates.

Rail privatisation is not comparable with privatisation of the utilities. The latter was bound to "succeed" because of the monopolies enjoyed by water, phone, gas and electricity firms. But railways have for decades suffered from ruthless and unfair (massively-subsidised) competition from the private car. One little nudge, to make the competition even less fair, will topple the railways. Here, privatisation is not about injecting the better practices of private management into the railways — John MacGregor is out to cause even more damage than Dr Beeching.



PRIVATISATION

Yet another (s)killing...

THE SALE of the government's Skills Training Agency — complete with sweeteners of £11 million in taxpayers' money — marks yet another triumph for privatisation.

While staff at the privatised PSA Projects Division will get their redundancy paid for by the government (see last *Eye*), doomed former civil servants who used to work for the training agency and were forced, bullied or blackmailed into joining the newly-privatised company Astra, will not be so lucky. (This Astra is not to be confused with the arms company of that name, even though it had the same sort of treatment from the government).

Before flogging off the training agency, the government commissioned a report from Deloitte Corporate Finance. Deloittes gave the government some stern advice about selling off STA, and insisted that "potential purchasers should continue fair terms and conditions of employment". These were to include "a right to redundancy compensation which is at least equivalent in overall terms to the sums which would have been paid had civil service terms continued to apply".

This advice is now being read with hollow laughs by the 2,000 civil servants who joined Astra. The firm has stumbled from bad to worse. Staff got no pay increase in 1990, and a small increase in 1992 was soon wiped out by an arbitrary pay cut of 10 per cent last October. Needless to say, redundancy terms were not "similar to those previously enjoyed in the civil service". When employees of Astra wrote to employment secretary Gillian Shepherd to complain about the blatantly broken promises, they were told: "My department has no responsibility."

Astra is on the rocks. If it goes bust, employees who were promised so much will be entitled to the (minimal) statutory redundancies and not a penny more.

In the City

IT IS FAR from every day, not surprisingly, that convicted criminals are lauded on the front pages of national newspapers who cloak themselves in overcoats of respectability. Even rarer when men who also cost the taxpayers millions and were lucky to escape prison are hailed as star contributors. And rarer still when the newspaper concerned opens its pages to someone who the last time he had such an opportunity abused it for personal gain.

Yet such is the rehabilitation (in City Road, at least) of Jim Slater, that none other than that whited sepulchre of probity, the holier-than-the-rest *Independent*, will from this week be featuring a share tip column by the man who presided over the greatest City scandal of the 1970s — the financial three-card trick that was Slater Walker.

On its front page of 5 February, the *Independent* proudly heralded the arrival this week of "the legendary stock market guru" who is to write a weekly column on the "principles (sick) and practice of investment". This column, readers were promised, would become "essential reading".

The potted biog that accompanied a photograph of the smugly smiling Slater (and why not after pulling this one off?) referred merely to the collapse of Slater Walker turning Slater into a "minus millionaire" — his own description heavily reliant on fiction rather than financial fact as he still had assets of £2 million. Since then he had "rebuilt his personal fortune" and recently produced a book on investment which had been "acclaimed by reviewers and investing professionals alike". Cue a puff from his protégé, Lord Hanson.

Nowhere was there any mention of how Slater only narrowly escaped a Department of Trade investigation into the 1975 collapse of Slater Walker because of pressure from the Bank of England, which did not want to damage confidence in the City by revealing what a can of worms SW had been. No mention of the bail-out for the Slater Walker bank by the Bank of England, which involved the taxpayer in assuming a liability of up to £110 million. No mention either of his prosecution by the DTI and 1979 conviction and £225 fine on charges of breaching Section 54 of the Companies Act for using Slater Walker money to buy SW shares. No reference to the narrowly defeated attempt by the Singapore government in 1977 to have him extradited to face charges of conspiracy and dishonesty alongside his lieutenant, Richard Tarling, who spent four months in Changi prison. No recalling of the secret share dealing companies which enabled Slater and his senior executives to benefit from inside information in buying and selling shares in SW's overseas subsidiaries. But maybe these all happened to the Jim Slater who once headed the seamen's union?

Perhaps most relevant of all the facts missing from Slater's CV, however, was what happened the last time a newspaper sought to take advantage of his share-tipping expertise to boost its readership. Then it was the *Sunday Telegraph*, where from 1963 to 1965 at the invitation of the City editor, a certain Nigel Lawson, Slater wrote under the pseudonym of "Capitalist".

How Slater abused that role to make profits of £20,000 to £25,000 (the equivalent of maybe £250,000 today) from dealing in the shares he recommended was detailed in Charles Raw's definitive exposé of Slater Walker published in 1977 — when the *Independent*'s editor Andreas Whittam-Smith was already a City editor.

Raw revealed that in 10 out of 21 tips Slater recommended shares in which he was already an investor, often along with his friends. He would then often sell out without recommending any sale to *Sunday Telegraph* readers. On one occasion at least he appeared to be selling as readers were piling in. Slater also bought shares just before recommending them as "Capitalist" and sold shares soon after such tips. He was often still recommending shares to *Telegraph* readers long after he had sold.

Lawson and his successor, Kenneth Fleet, told Raw they had been unaware of Slater's actions, which Lawson declared were contrary to his understanding with Slater. But then what did they expect when the price they had paid for obtaining Slater as a contributor had been to allow him to deal in the shares he wrote about?

The saintly Whittam-Strobes, a man who prides himself in taking the high moral ground on newspaper ethics, will no doubt not have repeated that mistake. Or has he? Perhaps readers should be told exactly the nature of the agreement between the *Independent* and "Changi Jim". Is he able to deal in the shares he writes about? Will he disclose his own positions both before, during and after he has tipped a share? But even if he did, how exactly does Whittam-Smith propose to control a man who does not need the *Independent* as much as the *Independent* clearly needs him?

But just how good a tipster is Jim Slater? After all, he hardly predicted the Slater Walker crash. Those who have followed his more recent tips, either among his personal Portland Club circle or among the readers of gullible financial hacks who like to write "Jim's in" without realising they help to get Jim out, tell less than wallet-fattening tales. But whoever loses, it rarely seems to be "Changi Jim".

On 14 March last year, Michael Walters of the *Daily Mail*, who like Whittam-Smith was there in the seventies and so should know better, listed the Slater hot stocks which had already featured in several other newspapers. These were:

Enterprise Computers, then 24½p. The shares hit 39p before losses of £11 million were revealed and there was a management shake-out. They slumped to 12p and are now 23p.

Wharfedale, the loudspeaker company, renamed Verity Group, tipped at 23p. Their high was 24½p, they are now 9½p.

MTL Instruments recommended at 293p. Unusually for Slater, the electronics group was a largish concern rather than a small shell. The shares hit 373p but are now 240p after disappointing profits.

P.E. Kemp, now CRP Leisure, was more typical. A shell operation, the shares returned at 27p, they are now 9½p.

Maddox Group was another shell. Placed on the return to market at 8p (believed to be the price at which Jim was in) the electrical group's shares immediately raced to 12p only to reverse to 6p and are now 10p.

Psion, the pocket computer group, was another Slater favourite at 125p. The shares hit 220p but are now all the way back to 110p on disappointing profits.

All of which, it might be thought, is hardly the type of track record to recommend to unsophisticated *Independent* readers who, unlike Slater, cannot spend all their waking hours monitoring the market. When combined with the shabby history of "Changi Jim", all this might have been thought to disqualify Slater from ever again gracing the pages of any right-thinking newspaper which cares about its reputation and the bank balances of its readers.

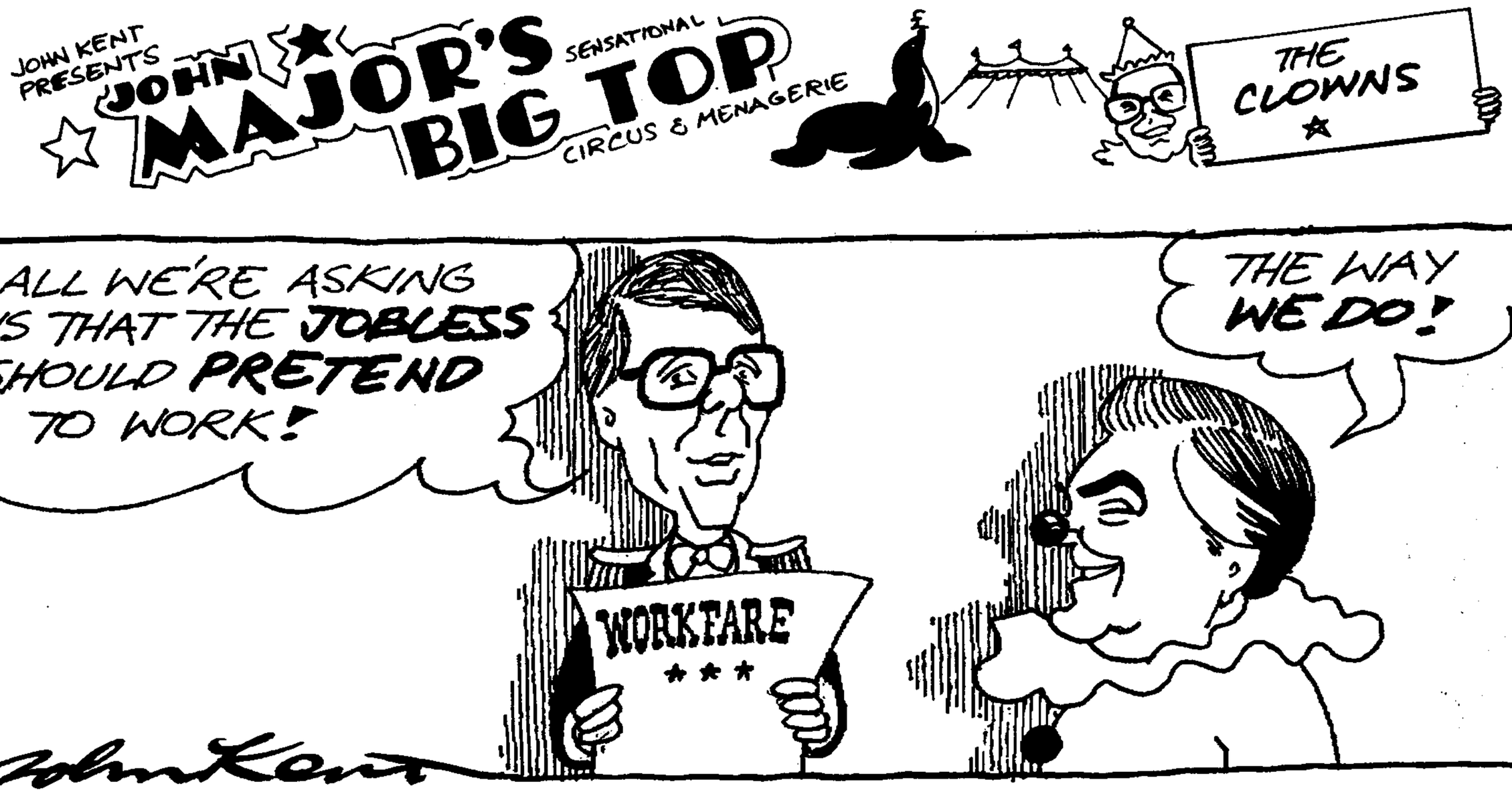
WHAT ARE WE to make of the disclosure that all the British Airways directors signed denials that they had not only not "implemented or authorised" any "disreputable business activities" against Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic, but not been involved in an anti-Virgin press campaign or "other improper activity"? In particular, what is to be made of the signing of such denials by BA's new executive chairman, Sir Colin Marshall, and new managing director, Robert Ayling?

Well, it is hard to see how such statements accord with Marshall authorising the payment of £40,000 for the report on Virgin prepared by BA's since sacrificed PR consultant Brian Basham and Marshall, according to BA's PR boss and fellow scapegoat David Burnside, pressing for the report, critical of Virgin's finances and other matters, to be leaked to the press. The report was leaked, to the *Sunday Telegraph*, but seemingly Marshall, according to Burnside, was unhappy that it had not been hard-hitting enough.

As for Ayling, he discussed leaking anti-Virgin information to the press, such as tales about the airline's unpunctuality when it began operating out of Heathrow to New York. These stories failed to appear only because the source of the data was too compromising to be disclosed.

If the directors have told the truth, then why not publish the second Linklaters' report, which resulted in the grovelling £3.6 million BA climbdown? Is it because it would show only too well who knew what and when?

'Slicker'



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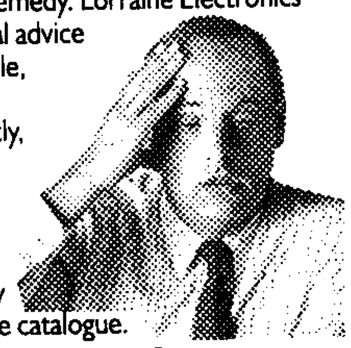

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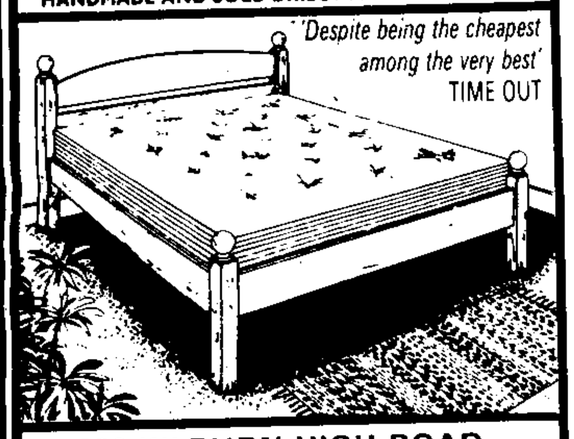

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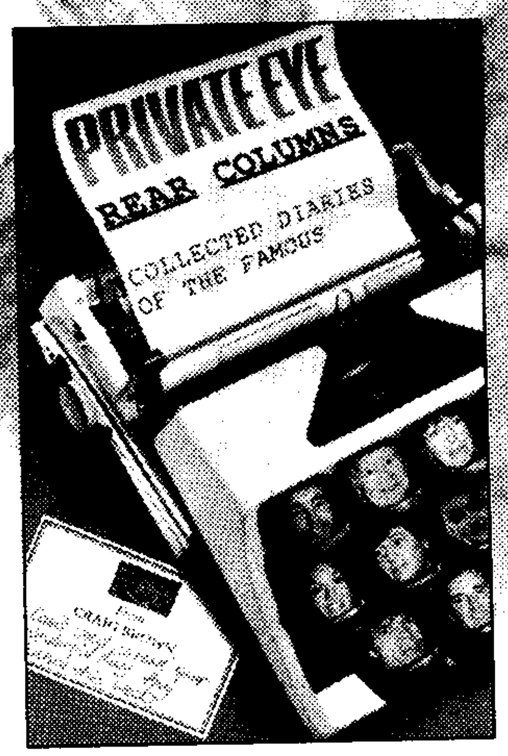

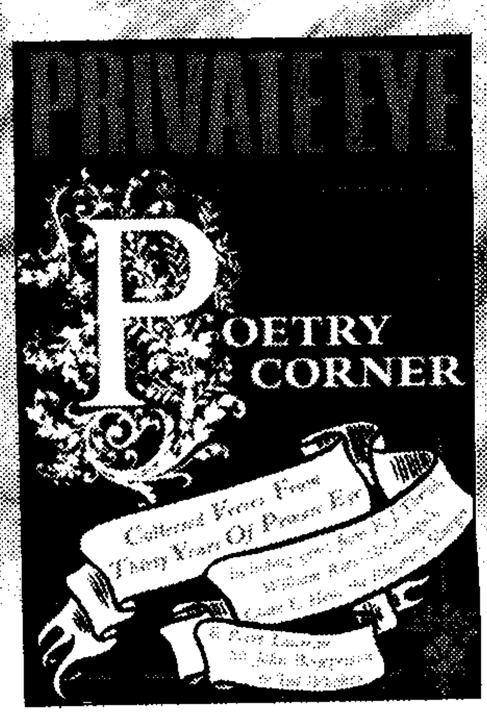

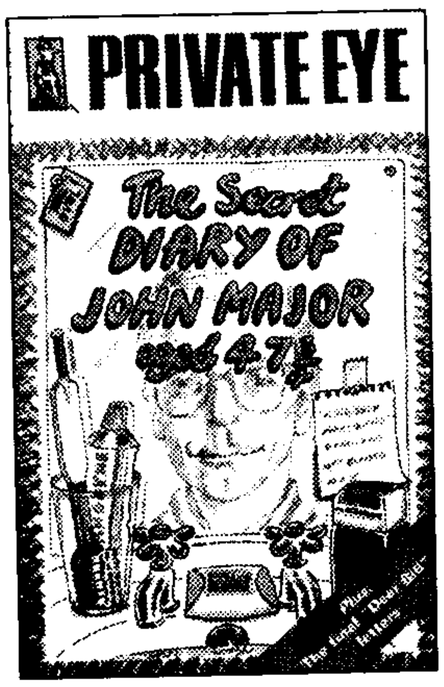

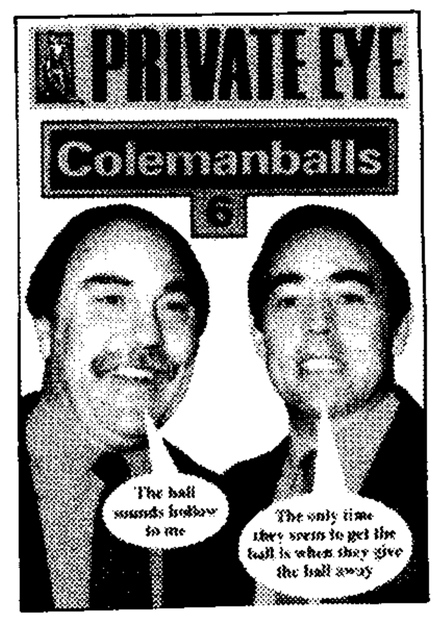
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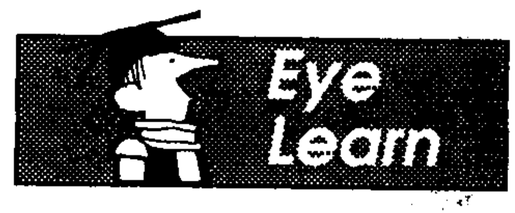

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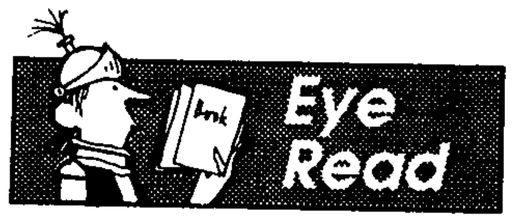

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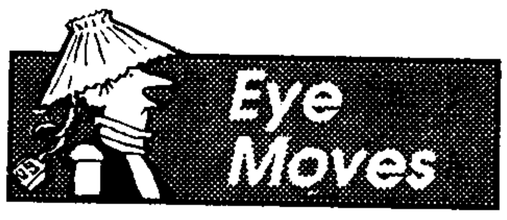

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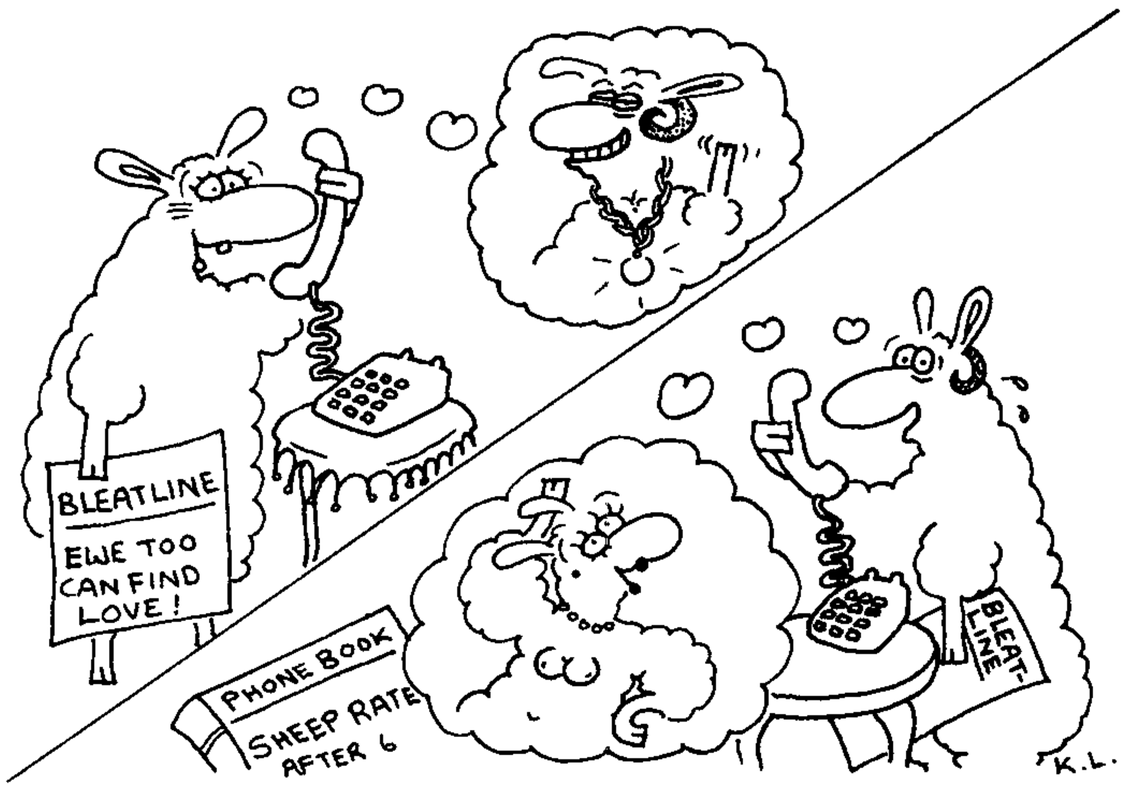
VALENTINE MESSAGES



♥ **MUNDANE,** I love you forever. MRS MUNDANE. XXX

♥ **MARY BRADY** I love you.

♥ **CATRIONA** my honeybun — more love and snogs? MAD GRAHAM.

♥ **DOCTOR TOM** my favourite shrink, maybe September what d'ya think? Love REB.

♥ **TO LITTLE WOLF,** put the kettle on, and get your clothes off, from LITTLE WOMAN.

♥ **FROG PRINCE** — The batteries are charged up, the oil is warm. Now all I need is you.

♥ **SHAMAN LADY** — Your magic has me spellbound. Love T.

♥ **BADGER** Love Rules.

♥ **LA-BOUND** Valentine: BELLE DU JOUR thinking of you.

♥ **AMG.** Soon to be AMGPLUS. Luv yer.

♥ **TO NAOMI.** Have a very special Valentine's Day. Love BEN.

♥ **JENNIFER.** Je t'adore! XXXOOX. HISTORYMAN.

♥ **PENNY?** Love THE VULCANISER.

♥ **PIGGY** I love you, let's go all the way. From THE LITTLE BAT.

♥ **CHRIS** — All my love — KAREN.

♥ **LINDEN** — One in the Eye for the one I love.

♥ **SEPTIC VIOLINIST,** FOXY loves you dearly.

♥ **ROZZIWOZZIPOZZIMORUNDOVITCH** Je t'adore.

♥ **BABY BEAR** our love is sealed by a podule. RAMPANT BEAR.

♥ **THERE WAS** a bad girl in MK, Who met a hunky big boy one day, He called her appalling After a rude public mauling, But he phoned to say thanks, next day.

♥ **YOU'RE A SWINE,** and I'm saying that's an insult to the pig. JULIET, C.P. 6000, 37100 Verona, Italy.

♥ **JESSIE,** Da mihi mille basia et peformancia fellatio, baby! With a not inconsiderable amount of love, NIGEL. Oh yes!

♥ **ICH WETTE** dass EJB findet es nicht.

♥ **DICKIE** — you truly are the elephant of love. Love SMUDGER.

♥ **RODEO NEL** loves LITTLE EM.

♥ **TO LORD GNOME'S** printer, love always, your PARTNER IN COURT.

♥ **TO "C"** — Hugs and Kisses from "C".

♥ **CLARESKI** — I love you, I think of you constantly, I always will. And I'm sorry.

♥ **ELVIS** — Glad you're alive and well in WW1 XX.

♥ **WEENIS** — Are we still muckers? My loves always, WITTLE EYAN.

♥ **IN SPANISH-ENGLISH** should I woo/ My princess set in Surrey scenes,/ Or let my body talk to you/ With lips, heart, mind and other means?

♥ **THANK YOU** for the flowers. I threw them on the fire. JULIET, C.P. 6000, 37100 Verona, Italy.

♥ **R. DO YOU** still want fussy on pace? Er... I mean... RPL.

♥ **MOUSE MAN** loves MINKY and SPROUT.

♥ **GILL AMOS** — I'll always be here if you need a friend. ANTHONY.

♥ **CATBOY** for you, BECKSY.

♥ **PIZZA MUSHROOMS** chocolate goose.

♥ **ROLY POLY** lady, we must do it this year. Love you more each day. R.

♥ **JOBBY.** Je t'aime YA BASS.

♥ **YOU ARE KIDDING** yourself if you think this correspondence will end. JULIET, C.P. 6000, 37100 Verona, Italy.

♥ **DAVID EVANS** — the sexiest man I know. Let me show you why. 40-22-36.

♥ **DEAR MONKEY,** I'm a HOG for you.

♥ **ANNE** — I'm in love with you. HUNK.

♥ **M&S LOVER,** clothe my nubile young body forever. X

♥ **ELVIS** — Glad you're alive and well in WW1. XXX

♥ **TO POTATO** from POTATO.

♥ **GOOSECREATURE** — Rafsanjani or dysentery? The choice is yours. Love, NEWTGRASPER.

♥ **GORGEOUS LOVER,** this Valentine's for you.

♥ **VOLE** — your devoted rodent, love, P. RAT.

♥ **NUBLY'S DAD** loves NUBLY'S MUM.

♥ **BIG BOY,** je t'aime vachement. TUFTS.

♥ **ROSUN** — all my love, ANDY.

♥ **TO DLMSO'TJ** two or three, I love you.

♥ **ANDREW** — I still think about you.

♥ **MARTIN BUNNY...** I love you RABBIT. XXXX

♥ **ROSEMARY BUNTING.** To Mansfield's finest with love.

♥ **LARNS** gives me the orn! Love TIGS.

♥ **FLOPPY BUNNY** loves a Sherbert Dip — how's about one?

♥ **NANCY:** you are never out of Sid and his minder's thoughts, EVER!

♥ **ANNE:** L(I'm)love with you. — HUNK.

♥ **I LOVE YOU** ANGUS DEAYTON.

♥ **SS HACIENDA** Days wonderful. Soon! Love you. SEMTEX.

♥ **IS THIS** predictable, my mortified PUMPKIN PIE? I am in love with you — OCTOBER.

♥ **LOVELY SQUIDGE,** baf baf, love TIG. XXX

♥ **REINDEER!** PIGLET loves you and looks forward to holding soon.

♥ **MUCKY VALENTINE** MOONJEAN — nearly 3 years together and nearly 2 years without an answer. If you're still up for it I can't wait. Shall we cement it? Love you. Be my Valentine this year. KT.

♥ **FLUFFYKINS.** Thanks for everything. A year of cuddles. EWM.

♥ **SMEE,** be my first rule of love and I'll be your forever man.

♥ **IF THIS IS** rock and roll I want my old job back.

♥ **SM, LOVE YOU** darling. BIG STICK.

♥ **DOCTOR DAVE** — I was just thinking that! Love always, S.

♥ **SUN SEEKING SUSAN,** CELEB says sorry.

♥ **BE WITH YOU** soon my darling JILLY.

♥ **RUPERT** my feet are killing me XXXX.

♥ **EMMA** share my dreams — KERMIT.

♥ **BRYN** — August Yup Yup Yup! With all my heart.

♥ **I'LL ROLL** yours if you'll roll mine.

♥ **JOLLY ROGER** Bad boy I love you, let's tango, SUEZIE.

♥ **SADIE:** I would love you every which way you wished.

♥ **BORIS WOOF** loves ANNIE WOOF.

♥ **JOHN** — I'm glad you advertised, LIZ.

♥ **KARYN,** your little boy says, "Give us a hug".

♥ **WICKLE SAUSAGE** my small delicious soulmate. We will succeed. We are Capricorns! Love and desire from BIG SAUSAGE. XXXX

♥ **DORIS (PREK-LEAP):** No delight without Butterscotch Angel. KHJOUM JOUNG BAN...

♥ **GAUDETE,** Ulverstonia pulcher, amor mihi. SMEGMA.

♥ **BABE WITH BOOBS** and high heels loves BRILL GUY.

♥ **SMUDGE** looking forward to loving you forever GEORGE.

♥ **JJ DU BIST** mein. Ich bin dein. PGC.

♥ **WELSH CUDDLES** still love you, have you moved? I have.

♥ **BRAT SAYS** love the RP and more. XXX

♥ **TO MY ONLY** WALLOPY PIG, love LITTLE BLOB — no "get off" tonight!

♥ **HARUN.** Serious dowry offered. Details HYMIE. One string attached! Apply within. Love ZOBEIDA.

♥ **NIGE GUY** loves VALPOLICELLA BIG-TIME.

♥ **D.D. — BE MY** Valentine — COLONEL MUSTARD, KGB.

♥ **CATHERINE** — the fast biker, love you, want you, need you.

♥ **McHIGGLE** — incompetent MA loves you!

♥ **TIM, LOVE TO** my dangly gangly hanc cinq. NAT.

♥ **FUDGEMONGER** — I'm fondantly yours — from QUEEN OF THE DAP.

♥ **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** DINGLE-DANGLE. I love you, WIBBLE-WOBBLE.

♥ **GEORGIE,** here we are again.

♥ **HTW** loves C. XXX.

♥ **DARLING SANDFLY,** last year a yo-yo, this year a you-you?? Loves and Fax, AMAZONIA BABY.

♥ **KITTIWAKE.** It's still thine, oh fucker divine.

♥ **HAARAAAARGH!** ♥
(Bleat?)

♥ **JAMES,** five years on and I still love you with all my heart, CATHERINE.

♥ **DARLING POD,** I love you. JAMILA.

♥ **PIXIE,** 'appen I love you! Hugs MUNCHLET.

♥ **CAPITAINE** — I wanna be your T-shirt. SOUS-FIFRE.

♥ **MOLE** adores his M.P. and looks forward to some serious heavy breathing exercise in March.

♥ **CELEB** it's definitely worth waiting for. Love S.

♥ **SWEETS TO THE SWEET** you swarthy little brute.

♥ **MY DEAREST TIGER** — "Aish'teru" — PUSSYCAT.

♥ **MUZZA,** with love from your old git.

♥ **MARK:** follow your heart, let it lead you to me. BUNNYLOVER.

♥ **MY LITTLE** cheek pouched beauty! FB.

♥ **HALLO HUN.** Let's go bald together. Love CLARE.

♥ **LAMBCAKE** — LITTLE BLUE says smoochy smoo smoo just for you.

♥ **TO DAVID** — Happy Valentine's Day. With all my love forever, KATE.

♥ **DOUBLE-"O" FURBALL** — love you, dream bear — from NUG.

♥ **WOERRRR** gf, see that storming, Valentine...

♥ **LITTLE POPS** (the lovely LINDY) loves her snugglebunny husband of 170 days.

♥ **DELTA KILO.** Love is polishing your shinny grey plane. Suck, suck. THE FIERCE ONE.

♥ **WITTGENSTEIN'S NEPHEW** — good luck with rich widows!

♥ **REBEKAH** — you are my Valentine now and forever. BLUE-EYES.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ **TWO ISLANDS** so far apart joined by an aching heart. Isthmus be love forever. M.

♥ **TIM** — I love you. JANE.

♥ **PETER H.** Masturbates

♥ **J. — KEEP** that heart beating for B.

♥ **INVISIBLE MAN** — Love you. MISS STATCHELL. Come and see me at the Vaudeville Theatre 7pm Tuesday 16 February for the performance you'll never forget.

♥ **DAVID L.** She does as well.

♥ **SWEET SUE** — be my Valentine: know that we were made for each other and that our love can never die. Your devoted PAUL.

♥ **CLAUDIA P.** Its Oscar or me.

♥ **PETER** — I see you in my thoughts and dreams every hour of every day, and since to see you is to love you, you must know I will always be yours — SINDY.

♥ **JOHN** — I see you in my thoughts and dreams every hour of every day, and since to see you is to love you, you must know I will always be yours — SINDY.

♥ **ANNA H.** Its your first.

♥ **DAAARLY** Daaarly Daaarly cont.

♥ **DON'T SEND MONEY,** for fate has no price. JULIET, C.P. 6000, 37100 Verona, Italy.

♥ **OCTAVIA B.** Hello.

♥ **MON ANGE** — I adore you! Forever, BIJOU.

♥ **DAAARLY** Daaarly Daaarly cont.

♥ **RASHERS** — Dublin won't be the same without me. Love MRS DARCY.

♥ **TARTAN T.V.** Don't be silly.

♥ **DILLY** — you old git, where's my rock? Oodles of bounces, snuggles and love, TIGGER.

♥ **ROWAN P.** Age is not its own reward.

♥ **IF MUSIC** be the food of love — make mine a Fanfare!

♥ **I BURNED** the photographs that you had enclosed. God, they were ugly children. JULIET, C.P. 6000, 37100 Verona, Italy.

♥ **JIMMY DAPPER.** Cut and cover?

♥ **R.A.C.** Love to the broads.

♥ **PUSSKIN:** Let's go shopping.

♥ **PATCH** — they do though, don't they though...

XC	6C6(E4,R12),9D5(R12)
STD	P.13,4E5(R3,R14)
STH	R14,6E4(R8,R13)
A	R4,699(R13,R8)

♥ **TO SPANKY:** the red-rosiest Valentine greeting for my English Muffin! Love, BUBBY.

♥ **S.B.S.** — I'm not too proud to say I'm sorry. Please don't burn our bridge — J.F.

♥ **IAN** — the best decision I ever made was to return to England and marry you. Yours eternally, NICOLE.

♥ **GRABAGGINS!** Hello sweetie! AML SPEEDY.

♥ **AARDVARK,** Je t'adore. Ta Chevêche.

♥ **DAAARLY** Daaarly Daaarly

THE END

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

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INTERESTING, YOUTHFUL, good looking solicitor, 40, with varied interests, including sport, art, cinema and theatre, would love to meet female counterpart, up to 35. Ring 0839 514055

I'M A LIVELY, INTELLIGENT, warm-hearted woman, aged 45, bright-eyed, passionate and humorous. I'm looking for a close relationship with a similar younger man. Ring 0839 514080

AGEING HIPPY, handsome, fit, marginally solvent, writer, musician, seeks unconventional woman for alternative relationship. Ring 0839 514164

EVERGREEN AND SENSUAL Taurean man, 49, seeks beautiful and passionate soulmate, 28 plus, to share fun, feelings, fantasies, travel, talk and much tenderness. Kingston. Ring 0839 514184

SLIM, FIT, WARM and attractive woman, 40, cultured, sensual, active, into skiing, country walks, travel, arts, fun and humour, seeks n/s professional successful man, 35-50, for loving and serious relationship. London Ring 0839 514225

ATTRACTIVE SLIM LADY, 5ft 4in, likes music, theatre, travel and walking, seeks warm, articulate, professional man, 35 plus, for friendship, fun and possible relationship. Ring 0839 514253

SALSA, LAMBADA, MERENGUE! Female, English beginner, needs male partner, not necessarily experienced (but patient) with good SOH for Latin club circuit. Try it, it's fun. Ring 0839 514266

TALL, DARK, HANDSOME, male, lawyer/dreamer, 35, enjoys sport, conversation, travelling, seeks beautiful, sexy, intelligent, independent, honest, childless girlfriend. Ring 0839 514279

PROFESSIONAL MALE, central London, 41, 6ft tall, slim, fit, n/s, enjoys tennis, cinema, France etc. Seeks tall female 25/35 with sense of humour. Ring 0839 514086

MIDNIGHT / MORNINGS Professional/creative man, well travelled, 43, working anti-social hours, seeks discreet liaison with attractive, intelligent, witty woman. Ring 0839 514454

EXCEPTIONAL MAN WANTED, 48 plus, cultured, honest grown up, caring, in touch with your feelings, playful, solvent, with joie de vivre, wanting significant other for life. Ring 0839 514296

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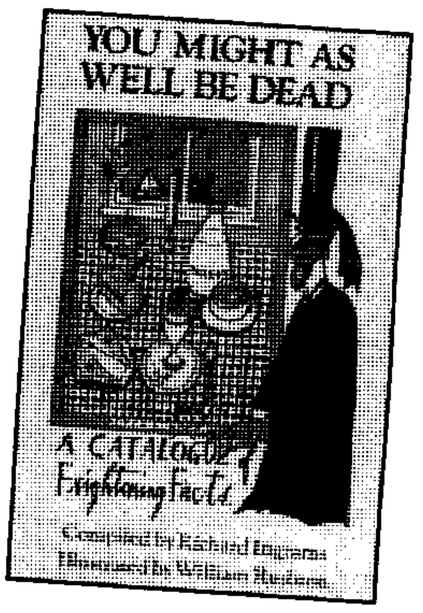

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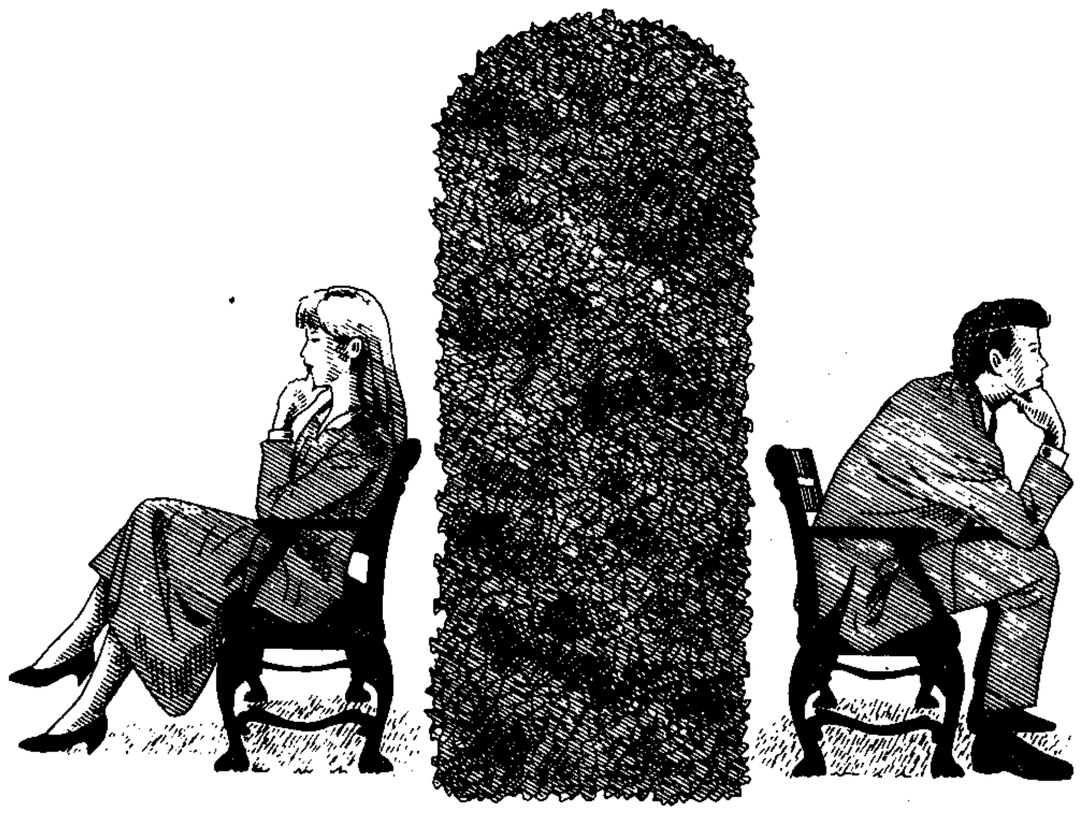
Others may simply be sceptical about the chances of success.
But for everyone who has doubts, there are literally thousands from all walks of life who join Dateline every year.
Far from being in any way unusual, these are just ordinary people who prefer not to leave their happiness to chance.
Instead of waiting passively to see what the future may bring, they decide to grasp it with both hands. And week after week, they prove that Dateline works. This doesn't happen by accident, but by a thoughtful matching process which we have developed and refined for more than 20 years. It's worth taking a couple of minutes to learn how we go about it.



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Next you're asked to describe the kind of person you'd like to meet by answering the same set ot questions.
You can even specify WHERE you'd like to meet them. (It's little use our finding you the right person in John O'Groats if you live at Land's End).
Then the questionnaire moves on to the really crucial part, where you answer questions about your interests, your personality and what you expect from your social life and personal relationships.
(Most people find the questionnaire both enjoyable and revealing).
Once the questionnaire is completed and returned to us, our computer goes to work, checking through the records of every single Dateline member, searching for the person who best matches the picture you've built up.
And it's important to remember that the computer may already be searching for YOU on someone else's behalf.

COMPUTERS AREN'T HUMAN

Our computer can't, of course, make relationships: only you can do that.
All the computer does is make the introductions and we find it usually selects six compatible people in each run.
Their names are given to you, all you have to do is arrange to meet. Naturally, there's no guarantee any introduction will be a success, but consider this for once, you'll be meeting someone who

POSITIVELY WANTS TO MEET YOU – and that's a good start to any relationship.
Dateline, we must stress, is not for people who think it might be a bit of a lark, but for caring people who are looking for something more. Perhaps that describes you?
If it does, fill in the coupon and we'll send you our questionnaire, together with a free copy of our paperback "All you need is love" – a book full of genuine stories of how Dateline members meet their ideal partner. Naturally, your enquiry will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

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